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NATIONAL REVIEW

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Medicare And A Mother's Death

Exploiting Oklahoma: The Left's Last Throw

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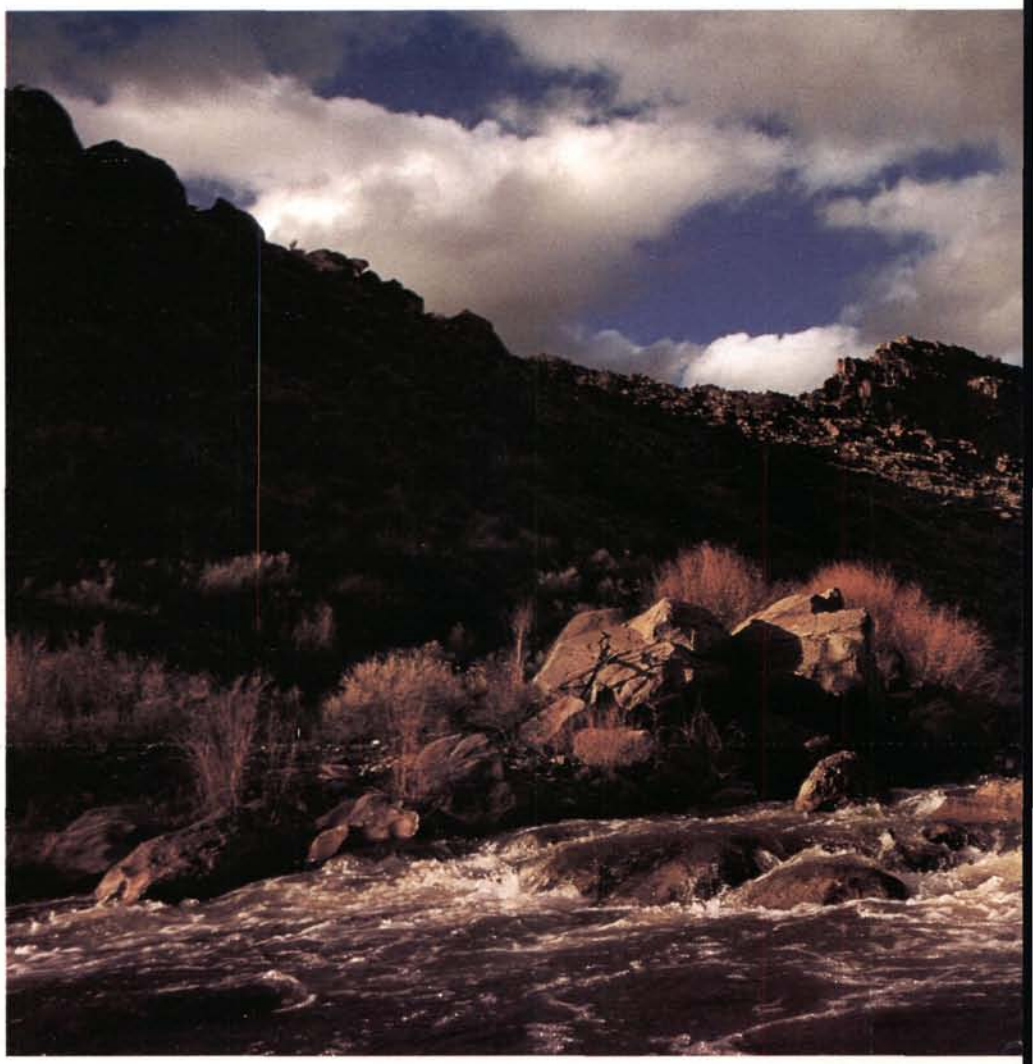

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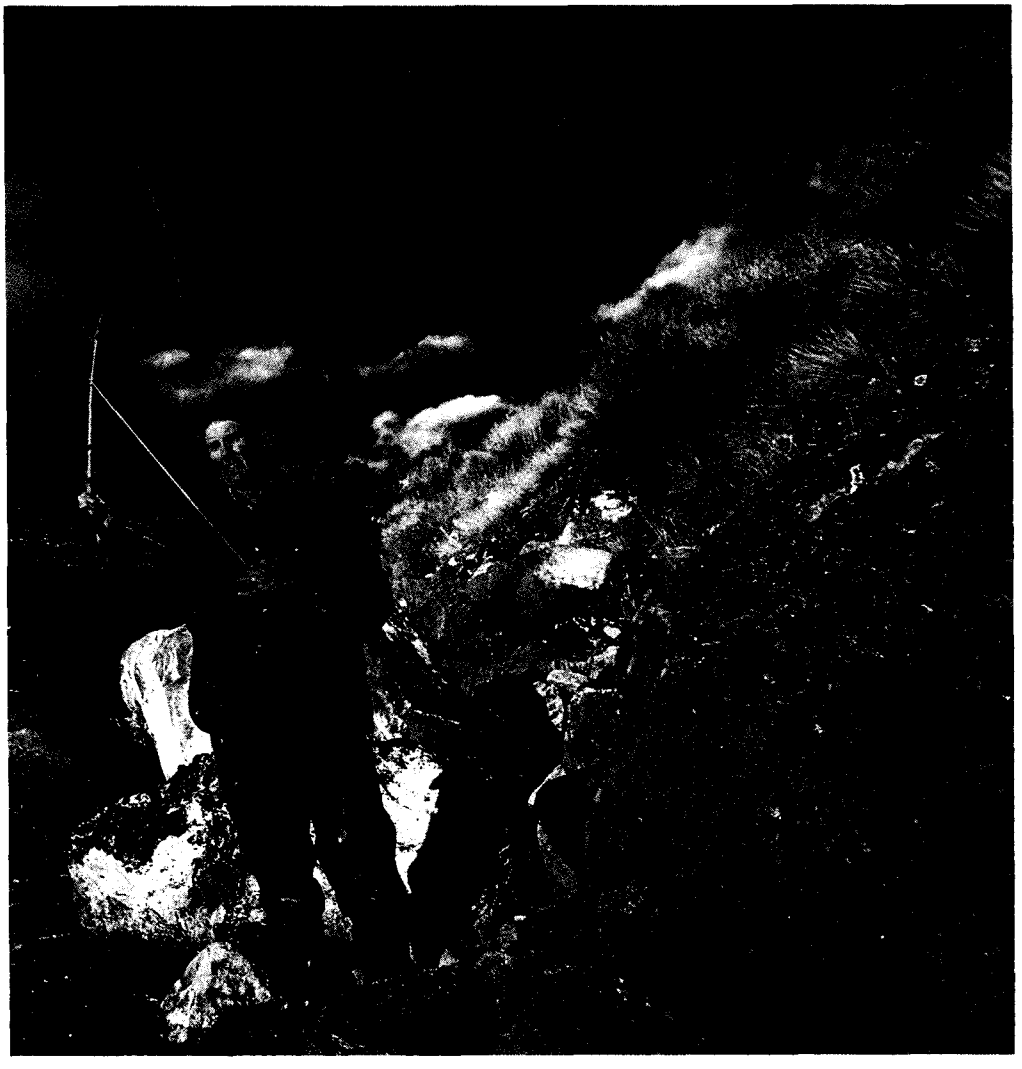

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NATIONAL REVIEW

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Letters

Fasten Your Seatbelts

As the congressman who introduced legislation to require the use of child safety seats on commercial aircraft (HR-1309), I was disappointed by your treatment of the issue ["The Week," May 1]. The Federal Aviation Administration does oppose the use of child safety seats on aircraft because, according to a study commissioned by the FAA, it would have saved only one life since 1978. However, what you neglected to mention is that the National Transportation Safety Board analyzed the FAA's study and concluded it was "flawed in the major assumptions used to reach its conclusions."

The FAA's second reason for opposing mandatory use of child safety seats on aircraft is its belief that it would cost a billion dollars to implement. You neglected to mention the airlines' reactions to that statement. To quote an official of the Air Transport Association, the representative of the airlines, "If you're in danger of losing the business of an entire family because you're charging too much for the infant, then you're not going to charge too much for the infant. It goes against common sense that the airlines are going to price families out."

As a Republican I am proud to have helped lead the fight against excessive government regulation. But how often do we see management and labor agree on the need for a regulation? Requiring the use of child safety seats on commercial aircraft is supported by the NTSB, the airlines, the flight attendants, and the pilots. Our children deserve at least the same protection we give our luggage.

Jim Lightfoot
Washington, D.C.

The support of the airlines for a government-imposed safety-seat requirement is indeed revealing: it shows that no airline dares to institute such a policy on its own, for fear of losing customers to its competitors. However the additional seat is priced, the extra cost is bound to be a consideration for families traveling with small children. At the margin, it will lead some to travel by highway instead, thereby exposing themselves to much greater risk. The magnitude of this effect can be disputed, but all the studies that have considered the issue concluded that it would increase overall deaths. —ED.

Editor's note: Letters of 300 words or less have a greater chance of being published.

A Matter of Life and Welfare

NATIONAL REVIEW finds it a "curious argument" ["The Week," Apr. 17] to warn that some provisions of the proposed welfare reform would increase abortion rates. The National Right to Life Committee's opposition is based on principle and sound reasoning. NRLC did not seek "to kill all elements of the bill intended to reduce illegitimacy" but sought to make them abortion neutral.

The House welfare bill, HR-4, contains provisions that will increase abortion rates: the "teen mother's child exclusion" (a prohibition on cash assistance for children born to unmarried minor mothers); the "family cap" (a prohibition on cash assistance for children born to mothers already receiving assistance for an older child); and the "illegitimacy ratio bonus" (a plan which allows states to collect a bonus for reducing the ratio of illegitimate births).

Unfortunately, consideration of the original amendment proposed by Congressman Jim Bunn was not permitted. It would have allowed states to provide cash benefits for babies born to minors *under the condition* that the mother stay in school and live with her parents or under other state-approved supervision, with the benefits for the baby paid to the adult guardian. Certainly no teenager would plan a pregnancy in order to be required to stay in school and live at home with her child's benefits managed by her parents.

Leading proponents of the family cap and/or teen mother's child exclusion, such as Charles Murray, Robert Rector, and William Bennett, have been quoted in print acknowledging that these provisions will lead to increases in abortion. However, Mr. Rector and Mr. Bennett have argued that the increase will be "short term," owing to changes in sexual behavior.

There are two problems with this. First, abortion is fundamentally and inherently evil. Being born out of wedlock didn't make it into the Ten Commandments—killing did. No good can come from accepting an increase in abortion rates, be it for two years, or five. Further, we see no evidence that the increase will be only short term. Unfortunately, it isn't necessary to change sexual behavior to avoid having a child when abortion on demand is available.

NRLC believes that once a baby is conceived—in or out of wedlock—that baby has a right to be born, and we will continue to work for that outcome.

Wanda Franz, PhD
President, NRLC
Washington, D.C.

Nothing in Dr. Franz's letter refutes our argument that "those states with higher rates of illegitimacy also have higher rates of abortion. By undermining moral norms the liberal welfare state promotes an increase in both." Cash or voucher support remains a prop for immoral behavior, the kind that Dr. Franz flatly excuses in the February 22 NRLC Newsletter, when she argues that the "cognitive functioning" of adolescents makes them incapable of thinking about the long-term effects of their actions. Psychological determinism is not in the Ten Commandments either. We agree, however, that cash benefits should be provided only under the condition that the teen mother recipient live with her parents or some other adult guardian. —ED.

Humphrey's Vision

Kudos to Paul Craig Roberts and Lawrence M. Stratton Jr. for "Color Code" [Mar. 20]. Their effort is both enlightening and disheartening. They did a masterly job at presenting the history of how Hubert Humphrey's vision for civil rights has been bastardized into the present-day abomination known as "affirmative action." But when they leave us with the awful reality of the 1991 Civil Rights Act, they do not propose a remedy.

The solution is a three-step process: 1) election of a "non-Bush" Republican as President in 1996; 2) election of a filibuster-proof Republican majority in the Senate with a continued majority in the House; 3) repeal of the 1991 Civil Rights Act and cancellation of Executive Order 11246 and its progeny.

Half measures will not do. The proposed California Civil Rights Initiative, for example, exempts all federally mandated affirmative-action programs from its termination of reverse discrimination.

Only with the execution of step 3, above, will we have the fulfillment of Hubert Humphrey's promise.

Alfred Lindeman
Greenbrae, Calif.

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Inspiring Future Scientists

Lydia Cheng watches as Dr. Laurie Gage takes a sample of stomach contents from a dolphin at Marine World Africa USA in Vallejo, California.

Real Science! Draws Teens to Careers

Imagine your kids switching channels to watch a teen reporter petting a pregnant dolphin, hunting dinosaur tracks in Utah or blasting off for Mars via virtual reality.

It could happen, thanks to a new public television program, *Real Science!* Created by KTEH-TV in San Jose, with support from Hitachi, this fast-paced series features teen reporters visiting with scientists to find out what they do, why they enjoy it, and what teenagers can do to prepare themselves for similar careers.

Real Science! was developed to change American teens' attitudes towards the sciences. Statistics reveal a striking drop in interest in science by the time students reach the seventh grade. Equally alarming, American teens rank behind teens in other countries in scientific proficiency.

Hitachi is helping to reverse this trend by donating use of its TV facilities and committing $90,000 to produce and distribute *Real Science!* Four episodes are currently airing on public television and in schools, and 13 more are planned for the fall.

The show's producer, Maura Daly Phinney of San Jose public television station, KTEH, says *Real Science!* has one overriding goal: "We want the program to encourage students to pursue careers in science."

Hosted by California's 1994 Young Woman of the Year, Lydia Cheng, the series appeals to young people ages 8 to 18. Each 30-minute episode includes segments on three different science careers. Viewers accompany teenagers as they visit scientists, who demonstrate and explain their day-to-day work.

Supporting *Real Science!* is just one way Hitachi fulfills its social commitments. "We want to enrich the lives of young people by giving them fuel for their dreams," said Fred Hansen, executive vice president of Hitachi Data Systems. "Society's future rides on the hopes of today's youth, and we owe them an opportunity to create rewarding careers and fulfilling lives."

Maura Daly Phinney, producer of the *Real Science!* series.

Hitachi's outreach efforts include direct funding of projects like *Real Science!*, as well as donations and employee volunteerism for a host of national, regional and community-based projects. These activities benefit education, the arts, the environment, health care and social services.

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Over There . . .

■ Radek Sikorski and Mark Almond describe elsewhere the different ways V-E Day was commemorated in different European countries. From the media coverage, however, the U.S. interest seemed modest—in comparison not only to the European festivities but also to last year's U.S. commemoration of D-Day.

One can speculate why. For continental West Europeans, V-E Day ended the the Second World War by either liberating them or defeating them. For Americans, Japan still loomed ahead.

Moreover, V-E Day marked a complete victory over an undiluted evil—the full horror of which became clear only as the death camps were opened—but that victory was not one of undiluted good.

It began the long subjection of Central and Eastern Europe to a foreign tyranny hardly less evil than Nazidom. D-Day, the struggle of democratic virtue against totalitarian vice, was free of such moral ambiguities.

Yet Soviet despotism was overthrown in turn: in 1989 in Eastern Europe and 1991 in Russia.

So, unlike earlier anniversaries, this V-E Day commemoration not only celebrated victory in the European half of the Second World War. It also marked the close of the twentieth-century cycle of war and totalitarianism that began in 1914 in Sarajevo and collapsed in Moscow amid the farce of the 1991 abortive Soviet coup.

In short, an occasion all can celebrate without qualification.

Unsettling, therefore, to hear that bombs were again falling on Sarajevo even as the ceremonies of reconciliation began in London. History never pauses long enough for us to enjoy a decent celebration.

■ I can imagine a film about priestly celibacy which, while arousing controversy, nonetheless told important truths well, namely that celibacy is an exacting discipline which breaks some priests but enables others to live a life more dedicated to God and their congregation.

Not yet having seen *Priest*, I am not well armed to debate it. But my impression is that the picture it draws is one in which all the priests are either false to their vow of celibacy or conspicuous sinners of some other kind. In short, the film is propaganda against Catholic celibacy.

Of course, propaganda can be art too. W. B. Yeats's *Cathleen Ni Houlihan* is both, as Yeats himself realizd in later life: *Did that play of mine send out / Certain men the English shot?* In essence, propaganda becomes art when it is supremely well done.

That, however, raises a question: when *what* is well done? If the enterprise is an inherently discreditable one—child pornography, say, or Nazi propaganda—then the fact of its being well done magnifies the harm.

The satirist Peter Simple asks: is a well made bomb better than a badly made bomb? After all, a badly made bomb might blow up only the bomb-maker, or no one at all; a well made bomb might blow up the world.

The same applies to a well made film.

■ The news that Dee Dee Myers, formerly Bill Clinton's press secretary, had been appointed to supervise *Vanity Fair*'s political coverage in the run-up to the 1996 election provoked some ill-natured people to complain of potential bias in the self-improving glossy. But editor-in-chief Graydon Carter was quick to reassure readers: Miss Myers's coverage would be balanced by articles from Christopher Hitchens, who is ferociously anti-Clinton.

To be sure, the Myers–Hitchens double act does represent balance of a kind, namely that between the moderate Left and the far Left. There should be a neat phrase to describe this amputated view of politics.

How about: "No friends to the right"? Except for advertisers, that is.

—JOHN O'SULLIVAN

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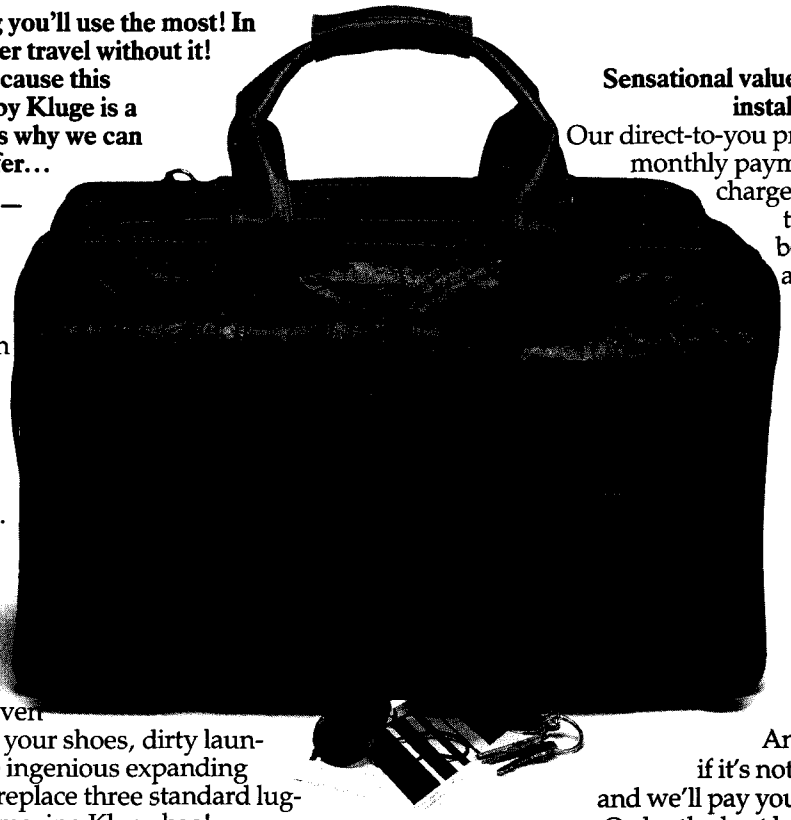

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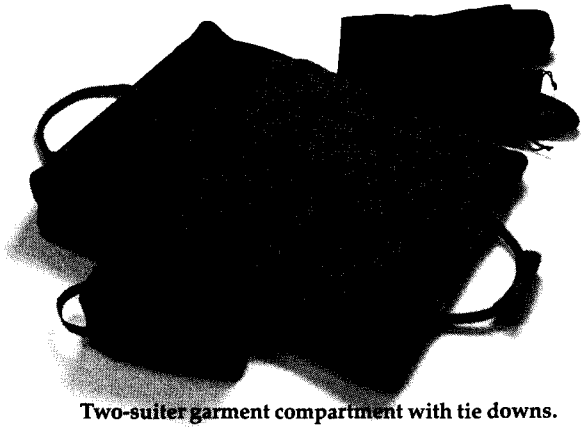

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FOR THE RECORD

■ Sen. **Phil Gramm**'s May 6 speech at Rev. **Jerry Falwell**'s Liberty University—meant to appease Religious Right—won praise from social conservatives like **Phyllis Schlafly** of Eagle Forum and **Gary Bauer** of Family Research Council. Gramm's emphasis on family values and flat declaration, "I'm pro-life," another sign evangelical Christians are becoming to Republican politics in Nineties what union chiefs like **George Meany** were to Democratic politics in Sixties. The same week as Gramm's speech, his presidential rival, Sen. **Bob Dole**, took Bauer and his mentor, Dr. **James Dobson**—host of radio's popular *Focus on the Family*—to "support me" lunch. (Dole and wife, **Elizabeth**, have also left D.C.'s Foundry Methodist Church because of new pastor's liberal views.) But Christian Coalition's **Ralph Reed**—subject of *Time* magazine cover story that profiled him as "choirboy to the rescue"—has told *Wall Street Journal* that absence from '96 presidential race of **Jack Kemp**, **William Bennett**, and **Dan Quayle** has left social conservatives restless: "It's the Kentucky Derby, you're all dressed up in your best jockey clothes, and there's no horse to ride." Reed also reminded Washington meeting of **Newt Gingrich**'s GOPAC that evangelical Protestants are only one part of coalition of "Reagan Democrats." Reed noted role of ethnic Catholics in big GOP presidential wins in '80, '84, and '88 (and their desertion of **George Bush** in '92). Privately, Reed hopes Catholics will organize themselves in manner similar to his own Christian Coalition. . . . Meanwhile, Speaker Gingrich's closest political associates say his refusal on *Meet the Press* to rule out presidential bid is no accident—he will make final decision this fall. But *Newsweek* political analyst **Joe Klein** knows what Speaker Newt will do: "My guess is he'll be in Iowa by Thanksgiving."

■ GOP House members' determination to get massive spending cuts this year was buttressed during two-day retreat in Leesburg, Va., by speech of **Ralph Klein**, premier of Alberta, who won re-election overwhelmingly after cutting spending by 25 per cent. . . . Further sign of GOP determination on issue was press conference blasting American Association of Retired Persons (AARP). "I just view them as a tool of the Democrats. . . . They never even talk to Republicans," said Sen. **John McCain** (R., Ariz.). Supposedly independent AARP, which actually has close ties to liberal National Education Association, supported **Clinton**'s health-care boondoggle and led opposition to Balanced Budget Amendment. . . . But GOP presidential candidate **Lamar Alexander** is worried about Senate action on budget and other issues: "Our greatest danger is a Republican Senate that is too timid. . . . the best hope of the Clinton White House is a do-nothing, timid Republican Senate." . . . Heritage Foundation report says cutting farm subsidies would increase farm income $14 billion and decrease deficit by $27 billion by year 2001. . . . GOP push on budget cutting also seen at state level in budget impasse between N.Y. Gov. **George Pataki** and state legislature, in which he has refused to pay himself or legislators until he gets budget reductions. Pataki's firmness is based partly on **Arthur Finkelstein** polls showing that for the first time the public wants spending cuts even more than tax cuts.

"Federal law, sir—you have to wait three days to pick up your shredder."

■ "The only battles lost in advance are battles not joined," said victorious French presidential candidate **Jacques Chirac**—considered a goner only months ago. A *Wall Street Journal* editorial claims his victory augurs well for France because of Chirac advisor **Alain Madelin**, a supply-sider who is pushing tax cuts. . . . In face of U.S. opposition to Russia's sale of nuclear reactors to Iran, one defense offered by Deputy Foreign Minister **Albert Chernyshev** is that they are similar to those Clinton Administration wants to supply to **Kim Jong Il**'s North Korea. . . . Russian President **Boris Yeltsin**'s decision to stand atop **Lenin**'s tomb during V-E Day celebration followed extensive debate in Kremlin; his aides feared symbolic reminder of **Stalin** and other Soviet leaders. . . . Archives show Soviets recovered remains of **Hitler** from his Berlin bunker and kept them until 1970, when KGB boss **Yuri Andropov** ordered them burned and dumped in Elbe River. . . . After failing last October, British Labour leader **Tony Blair** finally got his party to drop 77-year-old "Clause Four," which calls for state ownership of major industries. But few Brits may have noticed, since country is transfixed by four-hour nightly coverage of **O. J. Simpson** trial beamed by **Rupert Murdoch**'s satellite system. Prominent English barrister **Geoffrey Robertson** has concluded U.S. defense attorneys are "greedy egomaniacs." . . . Sweden's conservative former prime minister **Carl Dildt** says voters will regret current spending by socialists—"either Sweden returns to the reform path . . . or it could face a debt crisis around the turn of the century that will take extremely harsh measures to resolve." . . . Sens. Dole and **Paul Simon** (D., Ill.) will host 97-year-old Mme **Chiang Kai-shek**, who lives in New York City, at a reception in the Capitol in July to commend her and her husband's roles in the Allied victory in Asia in Second World War.

■ *New York Times* reports Harvard Medical School has appointed a committee to investigate Dr. **John Mack**, a faculty member whose recent best-seller is about people who say they were "abducted by diminutive, large-eyed, grey-colored creatures from outer space and forced to have sex with them."

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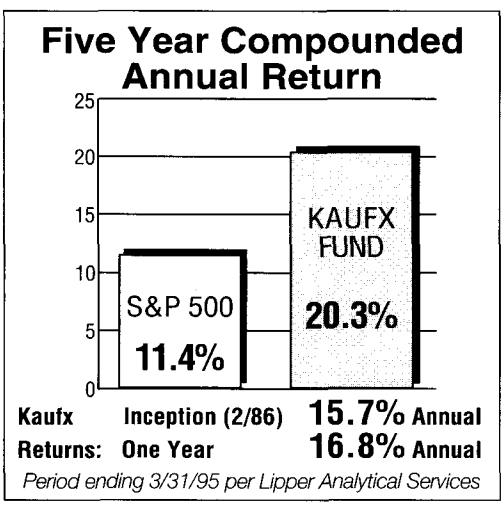

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THE WEEK

■ As part of his crackdown on domestic terrorism, President Clinton is considering a five-day waiting period for the purchase of radios.

■ Critics like to say the tax-cut talk is a simple way to appeal to the electorate's base instinct for fatter pocketbooks. They obviously haven't talked to Pete Domenici recently. The Senate Budget Committee chairman is constructing a Rube Goldberg device for effecting tax cuts. His idea is that getting to a balanced budget by 2002 will dampen interest rates, thereby boosting economic growth and reducing what the government has to pay to service the debt. So, a balanced budget brings a "bonus" of some $170 billion in additional revenue over seven years, which can pay for tax cuts. This is a variant of the supply-sider's "dynamic scoring," albeit in the service of an assumption —that lower deficits mean lower interest rates—that supply-siders tend to reject. The problem is that most of the bonus revenues come in later years. Over five years Domenici's bonus amounts only to about $80 billion, a number that bears greater resemblance to the White House tax proposal ($69 billion over five years) than to the House-passed package ($189 billion). And this is before nervous senators begin raiding the bonus fund to avoid deeper cuts in programs like Medicare. Don't believe in these tax cuts until you see them.

■ Some conservatives have complained that the establishment was outraged by a case of police misconduct involving billy clubs and stun guns (Rodney King) but oddly complacent over two cases involving tanks and real guns (Ruby Ridge, Waco). There is indeed a hypocrisy there; police brutality resonates in the culture in a way that overreaching federal gun-grabs do not. But conservatives risk a hypocrisy of their own if they acknowledge the inevitability of mistaken judgments when officers are wrestling with a drunken motorist, but not when they are confronting armed bands who have gunned down their fellow officers. Neither Ruby Ridge nor Waco should have happened. Randy Weaver was best left alone; David Koresh could have been arrested during one of his trips out of the Davidian compound. But conservative outrage over the two cases must be tempered by the fact that the Weaver clan and the Davidians had both killed federal agents. If the deaths would not have occurred had the feds kept their distance, they also would have been avoided had Weaver and the Davidians simply surrendered, the law-abiding thing to do. Being in the grip of a paranoid fantasy is no excuse. The Federal Government in both cases was misguided and perhaps reckless—tragically so—but not deliberately murderous.

■ Despite Clinton's call for infiltrating groups that he thinks threaten the government, it seems that the Democrats who have been crossing over to the Republicans are real defectors and not FBI agents.

■ LETTERS FROM NIXON SHAPE DOLE'S CAMPAIGN STRATEGY. No, it's not a headline in a supermarket tabloid, but a story from the *Los Angeles Times* about letters the former President wrote the would-be President as the current election cycle got going. The advice was, um, Nixonian. ". . . you have to run as far as you can to the right because that's where 40 per cent of the people who decide the nomination are. And to get elected you have to run as fast as you can back to the middle, because only about 4 per cent of the nation's voters are on the extreme right wing." What could President Dole sell out to China? Chinatown? Find those ASHBROOK FOR PRESIDENT bumper-stickers now.

■ Tom Daschle of South Dakota, the Senate minority leader, has a nasty little problem. In February 1994, a plane belonging to a South Dakota airline crashed in a snowstorm, killing the pilot and three passengers. The owner of the airline was a Daschle crony and campaign contributor. It looks as if the senator and his wife, Linda, a federal aviation official, intervened before the fatal crash to excuse the airline from instituting important safety procedures, such as techniques related to flying in snowstorms. The Daschles are say-

"What look are you going for today—honest, sincere, charming, adorable, folkish?"

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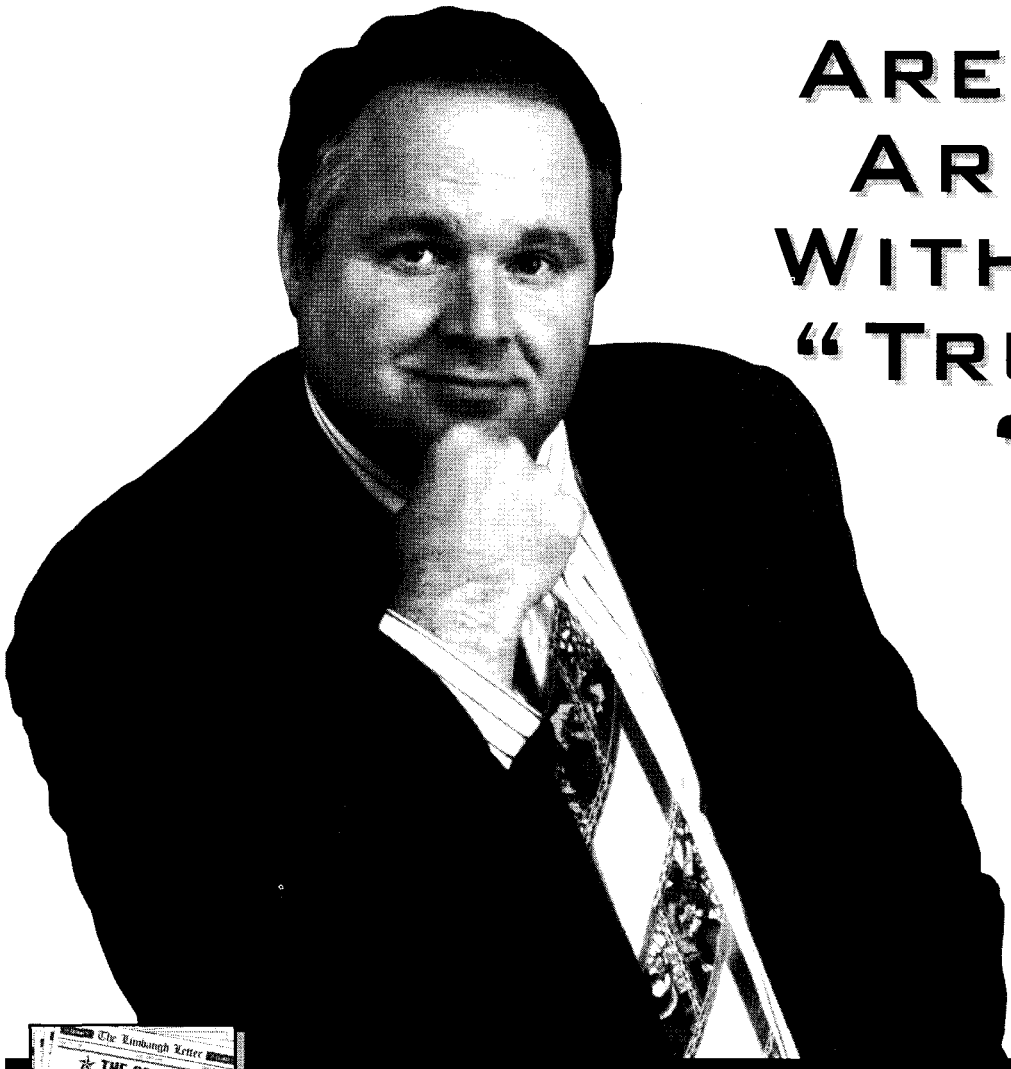

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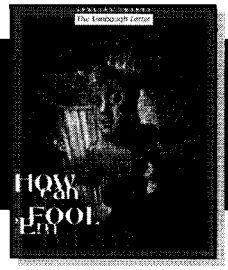

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ing they did nothing unusual, which may be the point. The Senate Ethics Committee will take up the case, no doubt a year or two after it finishes with the gallantries of Senator Packwood. Call Senator Daschle the Shrinking Minority's Shrinking Leader.

■ Newt Gingrich told *Meet the Press* that he "refuse[s] to rule out" running for President this time around. Newt may refuse to rule out the possibility, but his admirers shouldn't. He should do the job he has spent more than a decade preparing for and leave the other end of Pennsylvania Avenue for the next millennium, by which time his record as Speaker will overwhelm the negatives—combativeness, quote-a-minute idea-spinning—he has now. Besides, in the brave Newt world, isn't Congress where the power is? But if he just wants to tease Tim Russert, tease on.

■ The Supreme Court's decision in *U.S.* v. *Lopez* did more than strike down a federal law banning guns from public schools. For the first time since the New Deal, the Court overturned a federal law using a narrow—i.e., a correct—reading of the "commerce clause." *Lopez* reminds the Congress, and the people, that our system is based on limited and enumerated powers. Each of the three opinions issued by the majority reviews the jurisprudential road the country has traveled since the 1930s, with the Court sustaining the most expansive exercises of power by the Congress. Thus federal minimum-wage laws for domestic workers are upheld because the Pine-Sol they use has at some point crossed state lines. But hold the celebrations. Four Justices dissented, including George Bush's legacy to the Court, the no-longer-enigmatic David Souter. More important, two of the majority Justices, Sandra Day O'Connor and Anthony Kennedy, seem to have little zeal for the counterrevolution. Court watchers speculate they may have been responsible for the Court's failure to follow the logic of *Lopez* in several other cases decided at the same time. Beyond this, the majority's obeisance to the distinction between commercial and non-commercial laws raises apprehensions. What good is a proper decision on guns in schoolyards, if the whole panoply of economic regulation is left intact?

Clinton Shoots His Foot

With Conoco et al. denied
The oil Iranians provide,
The French, as is their custom, will
Fill up the vacuum left by Bill
As Shell and BP jostle for
The better berths along the shore.

W. H. VON DREELE

■ Last fall the Census Bureau reported that in 1993 the number of Americans living in poverty had risen for the fourth straight year, to 39.3 million. According to a recent National Academy of Sciences study, the poverty count is higher still, if you subtract taxes, work expenses, child-care costs, and out-of-pocket medical costs from income. Fortunately, both reports are deceptive. Government surveys reveal that nearly 40 per cent of all "poor" households own their own homes, 64 per cent own a car, and 92 per cent have a color TV. "Poor" children consume protein, vitamins, and minerals in amounts virtually identical to those consumed by upper-middle-class children. Any poverty count based on income rather than purchasing power misses a multitude of in-kind benefits, plus underground-economy income, and obscures a host of distinctions (e.g., between a welfare mother living on $400 a month and a graduate student earning the same $400 while receiving supplementary funds from his parents). When the poverty count is refined to reflect family composition, the number of poor people fell throughout the 1980s. Very few of America's "poor" suffer the material deprivation most people associate with true poverty. They suffer other deprivations, of the kind first analyzed by George Gilder. But don't count on poverty counters to give us a picture of them.

■ A chap in Cincinnati brought his 8-year-old daughter to the office for Take Your Daughter to Work Day, only to learn that he'd been fired.

■ The Federal Communications Commission has declared that Rupert Murdoch's News America Corporation, which owns almost all the equity in the eight TV stations at the core of the Fox network, is violating a rule against foreign ownership of broadcast properties. But rather than force Mr. Murdoch to rearrange his business holdings, which would result in a huge tax liability, the FCC is encouraging him to seek a waiver. A majority of the commissioners favor making an exception for Murdoch because they see Fox as an important source of competition in broadcasting. This is the right decision under the circumstances, but it shouldn't be the FCC's to make. The rule against foreign ownership gives a group of bureaucrats the discretion to punish or reward, based on their assessment of what's good for American consumers. Why not let consumers decide that for themselves?

■ The victory of the Gaullist Jacques Chirac in the second round of the French presidential elections over the Socialist Lionel Jospin ushers in an era of conservative dominance in France. Chirac's conservative coalition controls 480 of the 577 seats in the National Assembly and two-thirds of the Senate; it governs 21 of France's 23 regions and 110 of the 230 largest cities and towns. As prime minister in the mid Eighties, Chirac proved himself a friend of the United States—

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the Gaullists having fewer complexes about America nowadays than the Socialists. With Bosnia, Russia, Algeria, and other tough issues on the agenda, Atlantic collaboration is sorely needed. At home, Chirac campaigned as a supply-sider, proposing to attack France's high unemployment (12.2 per cent) with reductions in payroll taxes, other relief for small business, and a less deflationary monetary policy. He cannot achieve this, however, unless he also dilutes the "*franc fort,*" and halts moves toward a single European currency (in effect locking in the "*franc fort*"), to which he is also committed. If he can weaken these commitments and tackle privatization and budget cutbacks, France will enter the next century *bien forte*.

■ Preparing for V-E Day commemorations, the British government distributed an educational video to the nation's secondary schools. Winston Churchill rates 14 seconds of the 24-minute program, and then only to mark his defeat in the 1945 election, which enabled the Labour Party to "use profits from state-owned industries to finance better public services, such as health care." Another video, directed at primary-school students, sought to enhance "gender awareness" with comments like, "It was quite sexist in the war." Maybe that's why half the English schoolchildren taking a *Daily Telegraph* quiz thought England had been invaded. Sir Bryan Thwaites has also noted that while the original V-E Day celebrations needed no special police control, 3,600 officers were on hand for the recent festivities: "Fifty years on we may be safer from war but are we more civilized?"

■ Four members of the Irish Republican Army have sued the British government for £50,000 each, claiming that prison officials were negligent in treating injuries they claim they got trying to escape from Whitemoor Prison.

■ Earlier this year, the National Taxpayers Union (NTU) joined with Friends of the Earth (FOE, appropriately enough) to oppose "environmentally destructive" government programs. Joined by twenty environmental groups and a handful of deficit hawks, they produced "The Green Scissors Report," outlining their recommended cuts and reforms. Among their proposals were increases in fees paid by industry to use federal lands and the elimination of some Western public-works projects. This hit a nerve. Twenty Republicans, including Majority Leader Dick Armey and Majority Whip Tom DeLay, and one Democrat fired off a blistering "Dear Colleague" letter accusing NTU and Citizens Against Government Waste of betrayal: "Although NTU and CAGW ride under the flag of fiscal conservatism, these groups are merely two more regiments in Clinton's 'War on the West.' " To be sure, the report targeted Western constituencies, while conspicuously leaving other subsidies off the list; it is hard to take seriously a report that makes no mention of extensive subsidies to ethanol and cotton. Nonetheless, in the effort to balance the budget, conservative Republicans will need all the help they can get. If environmentalists have suggestions for budget cuts, they should be considered, and if taxpayer groups join in, all the better.

■ At a recent press conference the Competitive Enterprise Institute distributed little bottles of red wine labeled "Vino Veritas." In addition to the surgeon general's warning, each bottle bore a statement that has been ruled illegal by federal regulators: "There is significant evidence that moderate consumption of alcoholic beverages may reduce the risk of heart disease." CEI was able to proclaim this subversive message because it didn't charge for the wine. A vintner, brewer, or distiller that included such a statement on its labels could expect an unfriendly visit from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms. There *is* a growing body of evidence that moderate drinking reduces the risk of heart disease; so you might think it would be okay to say so, since federal law forbids "curative and therapeutic claims" about alcoholic beverages only when they are false or misleading. But the BATF maintains that any positive health claim about beer, wine, or liquor is "inherently misleading" to consumers. In other words, don't confuse them with the truth.

■ Representative Dick Armey, an ardent fisherman, on HR-1139, the Striped Bass Conservation Act: "As long as we are on the subject of striped and other bass, may I ask the nation—catch 'em, kiss 'em, and release 'em." That's just what we should do with politicians too, which is why we have a term-limits movement.

■ The Episcopal Church, for the last twenty years a veritable Petri dish for experimentation by mad bishops, faces a new scandal. Seems that its former treasurer embezzled $2.2 million from the church coffers. The money was used to purchase houses in Montclair, N.J., and in Ottoman, Va., and to purchase housing accessories such as tennis courts and a 140-foot dock.

Medicare as Tar Baby

Too sticky for the President,
  Who tossed it back at Newt
With forceps Dr. Foster would
  Toss down a laundry chute,
It's sticking to the ceiling just
  Above the Speaker's chair
As AARP ancients fix
  House members with a stare.

W. H. VON DREELE

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After being discovered, Ellen F. Cooke explained her actions as "a cry for help." Presiding Bishop Edmond L. Browning said he had not yet decided whether to prosecute her. That's some cry. And some help.

■ The Department of Veterans' Affairs is reviewing its penile-implant regulations, after its hospital in Jackson, Miss., performed the surgery on a man who had just served a four-year prison term for sexually molesting two girls (aged 5 and 7). Surely Gordon Liddy is right in this case: Shoot to the groin.

Victory Remembered

V–E DAY was more than the end of World War II in Europe. When Winston Churchill came to write his history of the struggle, he called the two world wars together "another Thirty Years' War." Add the Cold War, and you get a 77 Years' War, from 1914 to 1991. V-E Day was an almost-midpoint in that conflict. This long war resembled earlier wars in that it saw Continental powers—Germany, then Russia—trying to dominate Europe. It differed from them because, after the first phase, it was envenomed by totalitarian ideologies which gave the aggressors a real (if ultimately spurious) global appeal.

In the end, the Great War was a victory for the United States and Great Britain (and, except for the Vichy interregnum, France). London's unexpectedly moving celebrations would have reminded President Clinton of this, if he had not stiffed them in favor of Moscow's. It was also a victory for Anglo-American democratic politics. Early in World War II, James Burnham, at the time still a post-Trotskyist, predicted that the "managerial revolution" (i.e., totalitarianism) was bound to triumph, whichever country won the war. George Orwell made Burnham's view the basis for *1984*. Burnham the prophet and Orwell the artist both turned out to be wrong. It was the managers who ended up on history's ash heap, not the parliamentarians.

But the Great War also taught that there was no easy way for the victors to spread their ideals. Britain and America decided early on in this conflict that colonialism was neither a missionary endeavor nor a paying proposition. Hawaii became a state, and each country retains a few islands, but everything else, from the Raj to the Panama Canal, went its way. Both countries placed great hopes in international organizations—the League of Nations, the UN, the European Community—but these do little, and when they do anything, it is mostly bad. Mischievous bureaucrats hold permanent court in New York and Brussels, occasionally taking their shows on the road to Rio or Cairo. As the Berlin Wall was falling, Francis Fukuyama predicted a worldwide epidemic of democracy. Alas, that hasn't happened either.

John Quincy Adams laid out American long-term policy early in the last century: We are the friends of liberty everywhere, the guardians only of our own. That can involve us in webs of alliances, in wars great and small, in eternal vigilance. But endurance is our only achievable goal, our example the world's best hope.

Exploiting Oklahoma

IN THE weeks since the Oklahoma bombing, a myth has been sedulously cultivated by both Democratic politicians and the liberal media (insofar as any distinction divides the two). It is that this mass murder was the consequence of recent conservative politics: that the main suspect, Timothy McVeigh, was an active member of a far-right violent militia, linked to other militias in a nationwide conspiracy, inspired by the anti-government rhetoric of Republican politicians like Newt Gingrich, conservative leaders like William Bennett, and talk-radio performers like Rush Limbaugh. Thus, Michael Lind in the *Washington Post* theorized that conservative leaders such as Mr. Bennett, William F. Buckley Jr., and Dan Quayle "had helped to legitimate the world-view of the Oklahoma bombers" by, among other things, "promulgating the inflammatory myth of an anti-religious, anti-family, tax-devouring government, guilty of mass murder on a scale that dwarfs that of Hitler and Stalin," and "feebly condemning anti-abortion zealots," including those guilty of murder. Curiously, Mr. Lind was an affable member of the conservative movement for most of this period. Did he simply not notice that his friends and colleagues were legitimating mass murder? Or did he think it good clean fun at the time? For the record, NATIONAL REVIEW has called for the murderers of abortionists to receive the death penalty.

There was a less inflammatory version of the same theory from Jonathan Alter (ironically, *Newsweek*'s media watchdog): "From what we already know of the Oklahoma City crime, it's clear that the bombers took mainstream conservative ideas—resistance to gun control, the United Nations, and a powerful federal government—and made them extreme-right views." Well, it is possible that these claims will turn out to be well founded as the case progresses, but as yet we "know" nothing of the sort. What little evidence we have of McVeigh's opinions comes from two letters ("anti-government," according to *Newsweek*) to an upstate New York newspaper. One of these letters—a strong attack on cruel methods of factory farming and animal slaughter—might have been written by a member of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals. It makes no mention of government. The other, a confused ramble through several ideologies, is best categorized as a populist outburst from the angry center, with laments

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for the economic loss of the American dream and the threat of Japanese imports that come direct from Bill Clinton (*circa* 1992) and Dick Gephardt (*passim*).

As for the suggestion that McVeigh was acting for the wider militia movement, all we have is a report that he went to, but was turned away from, *one meeting* of one militia. You would hardly hang a dog on such evidence, let alone a battalion of weekend soldiers in Camp Fantasy. To be sure, some members and some militia groups seem genuinely sinister. McVeigh may have been acting with or for them; let the evidence, not partisan hunches, determine that. As Alan Bock points out in this issue, however, some militia groups are little more than recreational gun clubs with false hair on the chest. If they deserve anything, it is the cure of mockery.

That said, there is a common-sense case for law-enforcement agencies' keeping tabs on movements that might become private armies. President Clinton, proclaiming this, urges quick passage of new anti-terrorism legislation which a strange-bedfellow alliance of the National Rifle Association and the ACLU worries will overstep traditional bounds. Nor are their criticisms entirely unreasonable. His original proposal would broaden the military's ability to get involved in domestic law enforcement (breaching a fundamental American tradition), institute "roving" wiretaps that would be pegged to a person rather than a specific telephone number (expanding the latitude for the use of an intrusive surveillance technique), and allow the President to declare a group "terrorist" without the possibility of judicial review (a broad unchecked power for the Executive). Republicans have objected to some of these measures, and the Administration has already backed off a bit. The best feature of the debate so far is that Republicans have made it clear they wish to go slow, looking carefully at the justification for new federal powers rather than rushing to pass anything labeled "anti-terrorism." There may well be steps that should be taken—a domestic counter-terrorism center, quick deportation of aliens suspected of terrorist connections, etc.—but they should be taken only after due consideration.

Where does the wider conservative world enter this picture? A handful of apparently wild quotes from Gordon Liddy, Rush Limbaugh, and other talk-radio hosts are cited to suggest a link between mainstream ideas and extreme action. One may be morally certain that no worse quotes exist, since the dozens of researchers prospecting for them would have struck at least gilt by now. Even some of the original quotes are more damp than inflammatory upon examination. Rush Limbaugh's warning of a second violent American revolution if federal agencies continued to ride roughshod over people's property rights was exactly that—a warning, not an exhortation. It has since been copied, admittedly in the language of liberal hysteria, by newspapers, news magazines, and television networks attacking the "county movement's" hostility to federal land officials. So the attacks on Mr. Limbaugh are yet another example of the old conjugation: I am vigilant; thou art alarmist; he is an agitator.

But the general liberal argument that the Oklahoma bombing was an extension of conservative "anti-government" rhetoric is both slipshod reasoning and a sly attempt to divert attention from liberalism's own brand of anti-government rhetoric. There is, of course, no link between Newt Gingrich's proposal for a lower rate of increase in federal spending on school-lunch programs and McVeigh's bombing of a federal building. The first is conservative governance, the second anarchic terrorism. Indeed, far from being anti-government across the board, conservatives tend to favor limited government, supporting agencies like the FBI, the armed forces, the police, and the CIA, while taking a skeptical view of secondary agencies like the Environmental Protection Agency and the Department of Education. It is liberal Democrats who since the Sixties have spread suspicion of the *essential* functions of government, notably the security and law-enforcement agencies, denouncing them for spying on other Americans, restricting their operations through hostile congressional oversight, and depicting them as murderous and oppressive in Hollywood movies like Oliver Stone's *JFK*, Sydney Pollack's *Three Days of the Condor*, and even Steven Spielberg's *E.T.* Some conservatives have recently been critical—in our view, sometimes overcritical (see page 10)—of apparent abuses by the FBI and the BATF in the Waco affair. But when has Charles Murray ever alleged that the Social Security Administration deliberately murders people?

Any set of ideas, however pacific, might be cited as justification for murder in the disordered mind of a fanatic. The Taiping rebellion in nineteenth-century China, which led to thirty million deaths, was based upon a lunatic's distorted idea of Methodism. McVeigh's mind seems to have been similarly host to a jostling crowd of incompatible resentments. We will doubtless learn more of what led to his actions in due course. Until then, a little less liberal paranoia, please.

Medicare Reformed?

AT THE House Republican budgetary retreat in Leesburg, Va., in early May, Michigan Governor John Engler read aloud from newspaper stories that had appeared when he was making deep cuts in the state budget. The press had been relentlessly critical, with one article even blaming him for a death. Governor Engler had watched his poll numbers drop into the teens; he eventually won reelection overwhelmingly. At Leesburg, Engler was making a point: Brave the early flak, and voters will come to respect your guts and vision. Congressional

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Republicans, as they strive to bring the budget into balance by 2002, should keep this lesson close to heart.

The sniping over Medicare in recent weeks is an indication of the coming onslaught. In fact, Medicare can stand as a symbol of the federal budget. Like much of the budget, it isn't a welfare program but an entitlement with no relation to the need of its beneficiaries. Nearly all Americans over the age of 65 get government-subsidized health care; no wonder it's popular. And, just like the rest of the budget, Medicare will soon be spouting red ink, and posing the choice of increased taxes or increased debt. Medicare doesn't have to be cut so much as restrained. If Republicans can drop Medicare's rate of growth from some 10 per cent a

Message from Moscow

FROM Washington to London the message of V-E Day was clear: reconciliation with old enemies was the order of the day. Bill Clinton brought that idea with him to Moscow. Everyone is aware that triumph in the war against Hitler was quickly followed by tragedy, the drawing down of Stalin's Iron Curtain across Europe. Clinton's speech at the opening (ten years late) of the massive war memorial outside Moscow (designed under Brezhnev for the fortieth anniversary, but only just completed) was typically apologetic. He claimed the Cold War had obscured the Soviet Union's sacrifices from the West, but implied that it was the West's fault.

There were no apologies from the Russians for the Stalinist past. The "great leader" was praised for his wartime role, and no mention was made of the Nazi–Soviet Pact. Military glory was the dominant, in fact the only, tone of the Russian celebrations. Some bedraggled American peaceniks sat around disconsolately in my hotel lobby wearing the only "doves of peace" I saw in Moscow.

Boris Yeltsin skillfully used the Western leaders' homage to past sacrifices to bolster the real message of Moscow's fiftieth-anniversary celebrations: Russia is back as a superpower under his leadership. The fact that Clinton snubbed London but came to Moscow was a big plus for Yeltsin, but the Russian president piled on tests of the American President's mettle to show just how far Clinton will go to avoid an embarrassing rift.

The savage war of reconquest by Yeltsin's troops in Chechnya was just the first hurdle Mr. Clinton had to overcome. Even Jimmy Carter ducked out of the Moscow Olympics after the invasion of Afghanistan, but Clinton is made of sterner stuff; he wanted to drink the cup of humiliation to the bottom. Various snubs to U.S. interests have come from the Kremlin since Mr. Clinton agreed to come to Moscow, but the most gratuitous has been the Russian deal with Iran to supply nuclear reactors, camouflaged by his late concession not to supply a nuclear centrifuge.

What makes Yeltsin's ploy with Iran so puzzling is that even Soviet leaders never played so openly with fire. After all, Iran borders the ex-Soviet republics and is nearer to Moscow than to Washington. Russian spokesmen justify the sale on pure economic self-interest. Perhaps they really are the sort of profit-obsessed capitalists Lenin ridiculed as likely to sell the rope for their own hangings, but if that is so it is most unsettling.

Stalin and his successors were brutal but not rash. They did not even give the Bomb to China. Of course, the whole deal with Iran may be a risky ploy to push President Clinton into making further concessions.

Russia has just announced that it is going to break the CFE treaty (Conventional Forces in Europe) unilaterally by deploying a new army group in the sensitive Caucasus region. Elsewhere in the former Soviet Union Russian pressure on nominally independent states grows. Will Clinton trade their rights for the Kremlin's backdown on nuclear exports to Iran?

Or will he, as many fear, agree to a long-standing demand from the Kremlin—dating from Soviet days—to ban any renewal of the Star Wars project? There may be method in Yeltsin's apparent nuclear madness with Iran.

By allowing our modern cult of anniversaries to dictate his summit timing with Yeltsin, Clinton allowed himself to be maneuvered into a weak position. Summits have to end in smiles and success for an American President to get the bonus in the polls, but cheap ratings can prove costly in the long term.

The message from Moscow fifty years after the Second World War is that military pride—plus modern hardware—is about all Russia can muster. Worse, after a few years of post–Cold War flirting with Washington, the Kremlin now seems set on asserting herself. Anyone who saw the scores of thousands of Communist demonstrators in Moscow on V-E Day can see that anti-Western feeling has a potential groundswell behind it as it never did under Communism. Yeltsin may only be responding to this pressure, but that offers little comfort to Russia's neighbors. —MARK ALMOND

Mr. Almond is a lecturer in modern European history at Oriel College, Oxford.

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year to about 7 per cent, they'll be home free. But if Medicare is untouchable, so are all the forces that have given rise to three decades of federal deficits.

The GOP has wisely readjusted its early arguments on the issue, shifting from talk of big cuts for deficit reduction, to saving the current system. Medicare's trustees, a group that includes Clinton Cabinet members, say the current program will go broke by 2001. Their report makes it possible for Republicans to emphasize their good intentions, while getting savings from the program (that will cut into the deficit anyway). It's not the most principled argument—was the "revolution" really about saving Medicare?—but at least it exposes the central hypocrisy of the Clinton Administration on this issue and on the broader budget. When it comes to Medicare in particular and the budget in general, the Clinton position, the status quo, is ultimately unsustainable, deferring an inevitable choice between budgetary savings and increased taxes. But even with the new GOP spin, some of the poll numbers must give Republicans pause. Many voters equate Medicare with Social Security, and 64 per cent think cutting it breaks the GOP promise not to touch Social Security; 47 per cent would be less likely to vote for a candidate who cut Medicare.

House Republicans, steeled in their resolve after getting favorable reviews at home over the recess, are willing to put one foot in front of the other. But walking into this thicket takes some courage—or perhaps foolhardiness. Should the GOP ride its present momentum against a President equipped with both a veto and a nest of number crunchers in the Office of Management and Budget on an issue still widely misunderstood by the voters? Or should it postpone the attack until a second victory gives it the White House, Congress, the Congressional Budget Office, *and* the OMB —at the risk of fudging the issue permanently? The debate is not about whether—all serious people recognize that Medicare must be reformed—but when. To this question we shall return in our next issue.

Gramm's Way

ARMED with a big war chest and strong conservative principles, Senator Phil Gramm made an impressive debut as a candidate for the Republican nomination. Soon, however, his effort began to sag. Caught in a row with social and religious conservatives, he made it clear that he would emphasize economic issues, not moral ones, least of all opposition to abortion. Sounding more like a candidate for OMB director than keeper of the bully pulpit, Gramm failed to realize that a majority of the electorate—56 per cent in one recent poll—believes the country is in a moral crisis, not an economic one.

Senator Gramm recently tried to mend fences with the religious Right with an appearance at Jerry Falwell's Liberty University. To many observers he made a good speech, weaving an effective message of economic and cultural values, dropping his prior insistence on an abortion "compromise," and arguing that the growth of government is a key factor behind family breakdown. But only the day before, Gramm had addressed Delaware Republicans and never once referred to social issues.

Yet someone with Senator Gramm's extensive budget knowledge should know how government programs have undermined traditional moral values. Whether it is the welfare entitlement state without personal responsibility, or sex education that never mentions abstinence, or the prohibition of religious teaching in fighting alcohol and drug addiction, or the pro-criminal Legal Services Corporation, or the dumbing down of education standards, the Leviathan federal budget has demoralized society. Government has bankrupted both our values and our finances. It is true that original sin implies an inevitable degree of corruption among the people. This will always prompt demands on government under the color of need. But this process has metastasized in recent years. Senator Gramm is well placed to advance both aspects of this case. Let's hear it.

Back to San Juan Hill

THE word was, "make it go away," a Clinton Administration source told the *Washington Post*. And so the Administration capitulated to Castro and allowed in the twenty thousand Cuban boat people temporarily stashed at the Guantanamo U.S. Navy base. In return, Castro agreed to accept the return of any further boat people intercepted on the high seas. Since the chances that the Administration will actually hand over Cuban refugees to Castro's security forces are nil once the émigré community applies pressure, this deal represents a total capitulation. It is yet another example of how U.S. immigration policy is made by foreigners.

The motive for the Administration's panic is clear. Castro was threatening to unleash another Mariel-type boat lift; the Guantanamo boat people were threatening riots. This would have been even more embarrassing to the White House than the current cave-in, which judging from media reports is not properly understood. There are two key signs to watch for in assessing any U.S.–Cuba deal. First, does it rescind the guarantee of twenty thousand Cubans accepted into the U.S. every year, demanded by Castro as a safety valve and quietly conceded by the Clintonistas last year? Secondly, does it involve repealing the Cuban Adjustment Act, which entitles any Cuban to a green card after 12 months on U.S. territory?

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The Cubans are a people on the rack. Our hearts go out to them, not least because their torment is in part the result of U.S. foreign-policy weakness. But no U.S.–Cuba relationship can be sustained if it does not respect vital U.S. interests. Getting immigration under control is one of those vital interests. With the removal of the Soviet nuclear umbrella and the collapse of Communist regimes around the world, the end of the Castro nightmare is in sight. It's time to get it over with. Cuba should be invaded, and Castro overthrown—or paid to go live in Spain, if President Clinton cannot face using force on a fellow symptom of the Sixties. Then the Cuban people can have Cuba back—and America can regain control of its borders.

Podhoretz: Parade Rest

WHEN Norman Podhoretz stepped down as editor-in-chief of *Commentary*, he brought to a close a critical chapter in the history of American Jews. Mr. Podhoretz himself may have felt some political disappointment as he departed. In the November elections, the Jewish vote for Republican candidates barely broke 20 per cent. If his aim was to convert his fellow Jews to Republicanism, his successors at *Commentary* still have a long way to go. But then the Jewish vote, however important on the margins of some races, has never been a crucial factor in American politics as a whole. Mr. Podhoretz's contribution was not political, but intellectual.

When he assumed the editor's chair at *Commentary* 35 years ago, the idea that a Jewish intellectual could be a conservative was scandalous in some Jewish eyes. Judaism is an inherently conservative religion, based on the idea that authority in all moral and ritual matters is handed down in an unbroken line from Moses at Sinai to the rabbi at your local synagogue. But at the time, with a few exceptions, Jewish intellectuals were another matter. (And the more secular they were, the more liberal they tended to be, not unlike Catholic and Protestant intellectuals.) The exceptions could often be found working at NATIONAL REVIEW: notably our first religion editor, Will Herberg. Back then Podhoretz was no conservative. His transformation came in due course, however, beginning as the 1960s drew to a close, and Jewish intellectual life hasn't been the same since. In 1995, young Jewish conservatives are everywhere, and unashamed. Intellectually, they are the progeny of Norman Podhoretz.

Podhoretz and *Commentary* also exerted a mighty influence for the good on American intellectuals in general, staking out positions on everything from foreign policy to economics to culture that were way ahead of the liberal competition, and sometimes ahead of other conservatives. *NR* is not embarrassed to say that many a time our own views were profoundly influenced by articles either written or published by Norman Podhoretz.

Neal Kozodoy, his able colleague, succeeds him at *Commentary*. We wish Mr. Kozodoy luck, and he will need it. As Mr. Podhoretz has said, with Communism vanquished and liberalism on the defensive, Jewish conservatives are faced with the task of defeating a foe more tenacious than either: secularism. The challenge of reintroducing Jews to Judaism may prove to be harder than introducing them to conservatism, but without doubt the work of Mr. Podhoretz has cleared the way for a serious try. "You are not required to complete the task," goes the saying of a rabbi in the Mishnah, "yet you are not free to withdraw from it." Norman Podhoretz never withdrew.

Ginger Rogers, R I P

Lovely. Never, never change.
Keep that breathless charm.
Won't you please arrange
It, 'cause I love you,
Just the way you look tonight.

WHEN Fred Astaire sang Jerome Kern's song to a Ginger Rogers whose red hair was momentarily hidden under soapsuds, he was not only perpetrating a romantic joke, he was also expressing a wish that every filmgoer has at some time felt about a great movie star. Catch that moment, that look, that glimpse into the soul—and freeze it.

We are lucky that film has preserved a hundred or so such crystalline moments in the career of Ginger Rogers. Miss Rogers was a good actress (winning an Oscar for a dramatic role in *Kitty Foyle*), a great comedienne, and a sublime dancer. Many people missed the first two achievements because she was the kind of professional who made them seem easy, just part of the job. No one could miss the third.

In her ten musicals with Fred Astaire, she made popular dance a true vehicle for emotions as various as

Whitewater's Back

What Henry was to Falstaff,
  What Wilson was to House,
What Bobby was to JFK
  And GIs to a louse,
Bruce Lindsey is to Clinton,
  A circumstance that could
Result in an indictment that
  Does both in, and for good.

W. H. VON DREELE

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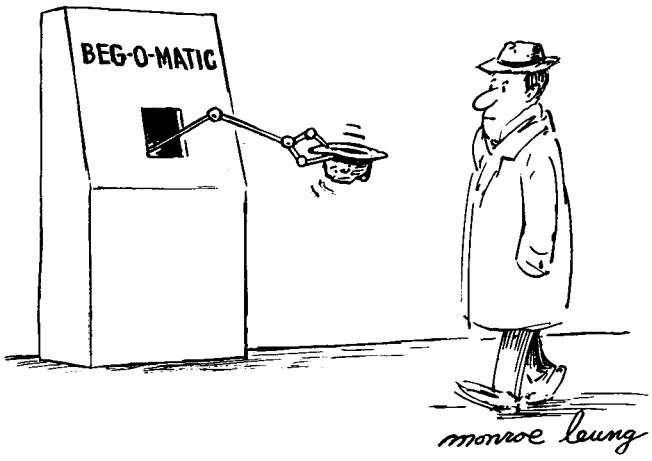

irritation, lightheartedness, and romantic love. Watching them in "Pick Yourself Up" or "Never Gonna Dance," we simultaneously admire their sheer gravity-defying skill and are moved to feel the emotions their characters feel. As long as our world lasts, whatever somersaults taste performs, Astaire and Rogers will tap irresistibly into our imaginations.

In her non-dancing roles, comic and dramatic, Miss Rogers played—indeed, was—a new kind of woman, a lively, wise-cracking, independent American girl. If Dietrich was the characteristic European sex symbol, mysterious and slightly threatening, Ginger Rogers was the new American type, sexy yet companionable—and only just out of reach. She had more romantic luck on the screen than in real life, with five failed marriages. But she worked hard all her life, looked after her mother, and voted the straight Republican ticket.

We have lost her, and yet not lost her. When we're awfully low, we can start the film—and we will feel a glow . . .

Notes & Asides

■ Memo to: WFB
From: Tony Savage

Dear Bill:

I recently received my driver's-license renewal notice, which included a voter-registration application. I was struck by the third item on the list of things the prospective voter is supposed to "swear or affirm" (after "I am a citizen of the United States," and "I will have lived in the county, city, or village for at least 30 days before the election"): "This is my signature *or mark* on the line below." (Emphasis added.)

The "motor voter" scheme pushed through by the Democrats is indeed all-inclusive. Tony

■ Dear Mr. Buckley:

I am a graduate student in the History Department at Villanova University and currently in the process of researching my master's thesis. It is an examination and interpretation of the Draft Goldwater Movement. To facilitate my research I have been named the Graduate Scholar in Residence at the Ashbrook Center and was granted an Earhart Fellowship in History. Through my involvement with the John M. Ashbrook Center for Public Relations as an undergraduate, I developed a relationship with both the late F. Clifton White and William A. Rusher. In this project Mr. Rusher has been an invaluable help, and I have gone through Mr. White's papers at both Ashland University and Cornell University.

But I am also attempting to collect as many first-hand accounts and documents about the Draft as possible. I am concentrating on the Draft itself (October 1961 to December 1963), as the Goldwater for President Committee is another book altogether. If any of your readers were involved in the Draft, from Republican National Committee members through someone who distributed petitions, I would very much like to communicate with them.

Jay D. Hartz
The Draft Goldwater Research Project
3360 Tivoli Court
Gahanna, Ohio 43230

■ Memo to: WFB
From: Ed Capano

Bill: This I hope will please our readers. It certainly pleased me.

(Enclosed, from *Capell's Circulation Report*, Volume 14, No. 1)

Best Performers in Circulation 1994

1. *Men's Health*
2. *National Review*
3. *Barron's*
4. *Architectural Digest*
5. *Prevention*
6. *YM*
7. *Southern Living*
8. *Backpacker*
9. *The Economist*
10. *People Weekly*

. . . *National Review*. Circulation Manager: Jason Ng. Moving up from number seven on last year's list, *National Review*'s rate base is up 50 per cent since 1992. With 90 per cent of its subscription business direct-mail-sold, *National Review* makes effective use of a discount pricing plan off a $57 basic price. Newsstand sales are up 23 per cent over 1993 with a $2.95 cover price. Ad pages up 16 per cent over 1993.

Dear Ed: Many thanks. Some of those other magazines are acting rather uppity, wouldn't you agree? Cordially, Bill

—WFB

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ON THE SCENE

War and Remembrance

RADEK SIKORSKI

BERLIN

"PEACE!!!" a leather-clad youth, his face contorted with anger, screamed three inches from a policeman's nose. We were a stone's throw away from the neo-classical Neue Wache, Berlin's equivalent of the tomb of the unknown soldier. (In fact, we were just *outside* stone-throwing range: in anticipation of a riot, closer access had been forbidden by Germany's Constitutional Court the day before.) Official Berlin was preparing to receive several dozen heads of state at the Schauspielhaus to commemorate the end of the Second World War. The Neue Wache was the site of the alternative commemoration. The two-thousand-strong rally gathered the full range of Berlin's leftists: from the neatly dressed, goofy Greens, to the riot-prone "autonomes," Germany's ultra-anarchists. The youth I was observing was one of the radicals. Suddenly, he raised his fist and punched the policeman in the face. The policeman punched him back. At this, several bystanders lunged at the officer, yelling slogans against police violence. For the first time in my life I found myself on the side of a German in uniform.

Their generally odious appearance apart, the protestors had a point. The Neue Wache had served the same purpose since the time of the Weimar Republic. Photographs show the Führer paying his respects to the German dead of World War I there. It also used to be attended by the leaders of the peace-loving regime of the German Democratic Republic. Bronze plaques appeared on it a couple of years ago stating what dead it is politically correct to honor there. But the monument is inherently ambiguous. With the passing away of living memory, it may well come to be regarded as a tribute to all the dead of the various wars, the innocent victims and the aggressors alike. At a time when two hundred conservative German intellectuals issued a manifesto against forgetting, by which they meant forgetting the suffering of innocent Germans, it should have been easy for those who remember the distinction to get onto the moral high ground.

The Left managed to spoil it. I talked to a neat young man in a track suit and a Cleveland Indians baseball cap, with a portrait of Che Guevara on the back of his ruck sack. He was holding the banner of the "Bolshevik Youth": "Glory to the Red Army which defeated Nazism under the leadership of Comrade Stalin."

"Do you think Comrade Stalin was a man of peace?" I inquired.

"He defeated Hitler. That's what counts."

"He also murdered millions of his own people."

"That's what the bourgeois press says, but I don't believe it."

"What if it's true? You would be like those Germans who did not want to believe in the concentration camps, wouldn't you?"

"If they were capitalists and defended the system, then perhaps they deserved to be killed."

If those were the only people who remembered German guilt, one would have to be worried. Fortunately, confused teenagers are not alone in keeping alive the memory of the rights and wrongs of the past. Despite the fears at the time of the German unification, the middle ground of German politics has held firmly on the side of respect for the truth. Instances of revisionism are firmly thumped by the establishment: the dubious conservative manifesto was criticized by newspaper editors, the churches, and most politicians. The orthodoxy—that by being conquered the Germans were liberated from Nazi tyranny—is firmly upheld. Celebrating your country's defeat as the day of liberation is inherently ambiguous, but on the whole the Germans have managed to carry it off.

The one blind spot they seem to have and the one jarring note in the Berlin commemorations was the absence, noted extensively in the German media, of the Polish president, Lech Walesa, who had publicly demanded an invitation to Berlin and was turned down by Chancellor Helmut Kohl.

Poland, the first country to resist Hitler, made the fourth largest military contribution to the war effort, spawned no organized collaboration with the Nazis, had an underground state second to none, and suffered six million casualties, half of them Jewish. At the end of the war, it passed under

Bonnie Gardner

Mr. Sikorski is NR*'s roving correspondent.*

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Communist rule, from which it did not emerge until 1989. There was little to celebrate in 1945, and commemorations were again low-key now.

In Berlin, I watched a lonely Pole standing in front of the Brandenburg Gate and waving at the official limousines on their way to the ceremonies with a huge Polish flag stuck on a wind-surfing pole. "Fifty years ago, there was a Polish flag on this gate; our soldiers liberated Tiergarten and the Polytechnic!" he yelled. "Now, the allies have betrayed us again," he told me. "First, they didn't help us when Hitler invaded, then they sold us to Stalin at Yalta, and now they let the Germans not invite Walesa," he argued, his anger directed more at the West for allowing Germany to get away with it. Most of the people who came up to him were Germans, he said, all of them with words of support. But the official insult has awakened the worst Polish fears. Germany's repeated assurances of a desire for a German–Polish reconciliation on the model of the one with France now look threadbare. At some level, we are *Untermenschen* to the Germans still. It's a bad omen. Before the Nazis vented their fanaticism on the Jews, Bismarck had practiced *Kulturkampf*—cultural genocide—on the Poles.

So, uncannily, the celebrations of the fiftieth anniversary of the war's end have resurrected the feelings at the end of the war itself: ambiguity in Germany, a sense of betrayal in Poland. Ambivalence also reigns in Russia. Just as it had done fifty years ago, Moscow has appropriated the glory, downgrading the proportionately larger sacrifices of Ukraine and Belarus. Just as the victory in World War II saved Stalin's regime from possible internal collapse, so the commemoration of its anniversary might yet restore a sense of purpose to the Russia of Boris Yeltsin. And just as fifty years ago Russians were ambivalent as to whether to regard Stalin as a bloody tyrant or their deliverer from Nazism, so today they are confused about their Soviet legacy. Soviet symbols—the red flag over the Reichstag, the red star on the veterans' caps—stand for the one thing Russians can feel good about in their country this century.

But latching onto the Soviet legacy of victory carries long-term risks. It may be politically expedient for the embattled Yeltsin administration to bask in the reflected glory of Marshal Zhukov—the top Soviet commander in the war—but it will make it all the harder for the Russians to create a new post-imperial national identity for themselves. The fate of the statue to Marshal Zhukov makes the point well. Last year, the plan was to erect the Zhukov statue on the site of the Lenin mausoleum, which was to be demolished, the corpse sent for proper burial. But on V-E Day Boris Yeltsin unveiled the statue on another side of Red Square, and he reviewed the veterans' parade from the top of the mausoleum, just as Stalin, Khrushchev, and Brezhnev had done. The mausoleum is probably here to stay. Thus the monuments to the two men, the founder of Russia's totalitarianism and her savior from another one, will illustrate Russia's inability to come to terms with its past.

PERHAPS more surprisingly, the war's anniversary resurrected the past in Western capitals as well. Cleverly, the French staged a military parade without speeches, which not only lessened the tedium but also saved the poor dears from having to explain how they managed to launder themselves into one of the victorious allies and gain an occupation zone in Germany in spite of years of collaboration by Vichy officials such as the young François Mitterrand. It was a subterfuge worthy of de Gaulle, who fifty years ago managed to persuade American officials to let him into Paris when the gates were already open, so he could pretend that it was his forces that liberated it.

The echoes are particularly poignant in Britain. Having lived in Britain for several years, I had hardly ever seen public expressions of patriotism, except for the last night of the Promenade concerts, a not entirely serious occasion. Love of country, the joy in a sense of belonging, pride in national achievement, was for the little people. Flag waving was something one associated with football hooligans. Suddenly, patriotism was back in. In the week of V-E Day, hardly a country pub remained free of Union Jacks; friends tell me that you could hardly move in Hyde Park for the throng of revelers. For several days, the air resounded with the tunes of sentimental wartime songs. The royal family, including some of the same members as fifty years ago, showed itself to the jubilant crowds from the same Buckingham Palace balcony as they had then. At St. Paul's Cathedral, which miraculously survived the blitz virtually unscathed, grandees of the Church of England, in their daily routines busy with such weighty matters as the rights and duties of lesbian priestesses, managed to strike chords of genuine pathos. The outpouring of emotion was part nostalgia of the older generation for their youth, part an attempt to relive the last time Britain played a world-historical role, and part a longing for an age of heroism. Unique among European countries, Britain celebrated the anniversary of V-E Day at peace with itself, its conscience as clear as it had been when it had fought the war.

And yet, a sense of foreboding filled the op-ed pages of British newspapers, just as it had fifty years before. As the historian Corelli Barnett put it, Britain could only have won a long war, but it could only afford a short one. Having mortgaged its national wealth to win, it went on a spending spree and replaced the heroic Winston Churchill with a Labour government that was supposed to distribute the non-existent fruits of victory. The credit soon ran out, and Britain faced economic collapse and starvation. Soon, the empire which the war was supposed to preserve was gone.

And today, just as in 1945, Britain feels secure about its past, but is worried about its future. Then, it was the sense that the war was won but the peace was lost, and that Britain was emerging from the war a diminished power. Today, the unification of Europe raises questions about the country's very identity. The monarchy, the constitutional union with Scotland, the common law, as well as the hard-won achievements of Thatcherism, are seen to be under threat. "Did we fight on the beaches of Normandy only to see India go its own way?" has given way to "Did we privatize our pensions only to join the European single currency so as to finance other peoples' state pensions from our taxes?" As Norman Tebbit, a former chairman of the Conservative Party, put it, "I'll be wondering if those who died to keep us free would have given their lives had they known we would be ruled by the Germans, Italians, Spaniards, French, and the rest only fifty years on."

But of all the celebrations around the world, perhaps the most surprising

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were the low-key ceremonies in America, the one World War II combatant that could truly count itself a victor. America emerged from it as the leader of the Western world, its economy doubled in size, accounting for 40 per cent of the world's GDP. A Caesar would be proud. Yet Americans remain strangely detached from it, perhaps because its casualties were so much lower. At 400,000 dead, the U.S. lost less than half as many people as just one Russian city—Leningrad. That and the ignorance among people who should know better, also echo the past. I watched CNN's 30-second history of World War II. It was as good as a thirty-second history can be, except that it used the current map of Europe, which must have left observant viewers perplexed as to how the Wehrmacht managed to attack Moscow by leaping over Poland and Belarus.

This reminded me of a scene I recently gleaned from my uncle's wartime memoirs. A teenager when the war broke out, he was plucked out of a concentration camp only to be subjected to medical experiments in a German hospital. When the Americans arrived, he greeted them in a crowd of slave laborers and camp survivors and was impressed with their neat uniforms, healthy appearance, and smiling faces. But he also noticed that they seemed not to comprehend what the people they were liberating had gone through. They could hardly be bothered to acknowledge the cheering. When one of the soldiers threw down a cigarette butt and one of the wretched survivors picked it up, he had several camera lenses aimed at him. It was at that moment that my uncle, a decent, earnest, intelligent man, decided he had more in common with the Russians, underdogs like himself. He went back to Poland and became a Communist.

So do the commemorations prove that peoples learn nothing from their history? Not quite. Victors don't learn. Americans carry on as if they can always win effortlessly. The British are still perplexed not to be top dogs. The French still mourn their long-lost glory. Russians treat Grozny as if it were 1945 Berlin. But the losers do learn. The Germans learned that they can't take on the world. The Jews learned that they need their own state. And the Poles now know that the West will always dump them. The money spent on the anniversary celebrations was well worth it. □

Clearing Out the Cabinet

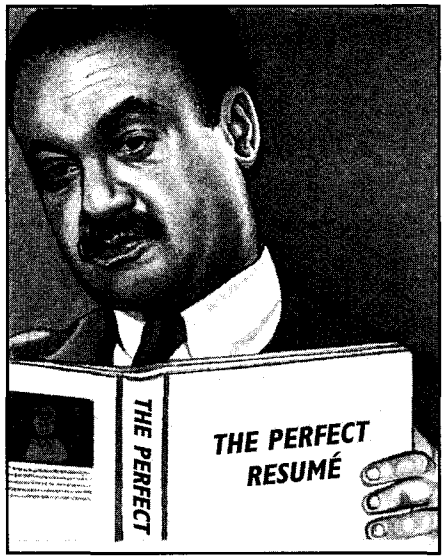
RICH LOWRY

WASHINGTON, D.C.

WHEN a group of first-term House Republicans led by Sam Brownback (Kan.) held a press conference in February touting their intention to eliminate four Cabinet-level federal departments, it seemed a nice gesture of freshman earnestness. *Newsweek* would refer to the group in another context as "the Shiites." But Shia went mainstream in March, when Bob Dole echoed the freshmen's call to abolish four departments. Senate conservatives later upped the ante to six, and when the Heritage Foundation released its plan to balance the budget, it went to nine, just to stay on the cutting edge.

The conservative throwaway line for more than a decade—"Why do we even need a Department of ____?"—has become Republican policy. The number for now won't be nine, six, or even four—the House budget resolution will likely recomend eliminating three departments (Commerce, Energy, and Education), the Senate, just one (Commerce). Nonetheless, this is a genuine government-cutting gesture, which Republicans hope will satisfy the public desire for change expressed last November, while producing the savings in discretionary spending needed to balance the budget.

There may be no better barometer for the climate in Washington—and the rightward dynamics of 1996 presidential politics—than the newly precarious existence of whole departments. In the Senate, staffers have been meeting with former Reagan Administration officials to decide what agencies can be jettisoned. "Dole's folks in these meetings are really carrying a hard line," says one Senate staffer. "They want to eliminate, eliminate, eliminate for as much budget savings as possible. And you had these former Reagan Administration people arguing to preserve certain agencies and projects within the departments. It's just amazing. These are Reagan appointees, Reaganites, and they're to the left of Dole."



BROWNBACK, after winning an open seat by campaigning on a vigorous anti-government message, came to Washington late last year ready to rethink the role of the Federal Government. He soon met a score of other freshmen with similar inclinations. They formed a group dubbed the "New Federalists" that began meeting weekly and decided to concentrate on four departments: Commerce, Energy, Education, and Housing and Urban Development. Former secretaries of each were lined up to endorse the freshmen's designs on their old stomping grounds; former HUD Secretary Jack Kemp and Commerce Secretary Robert Mosbacher even showed up at the February 14 press conference.

That event could have been the high-water mark for Operation Eliminate. But attending the press conference was Budget Committee Chairman John Kasich (Ohio), who had given the freshmen advice. And the group was determined to move beyond rhetoric. Departments were parceled out to task forces charged with arriving at credible plans for deconstruction. Sue Myrick (N.C.) and Brownback were assigned the HUD task force; Todd Tiahrt (Kan.) got Energy; Dick Chrysler

Mr. Lowry is NR*'s national political reporter.*

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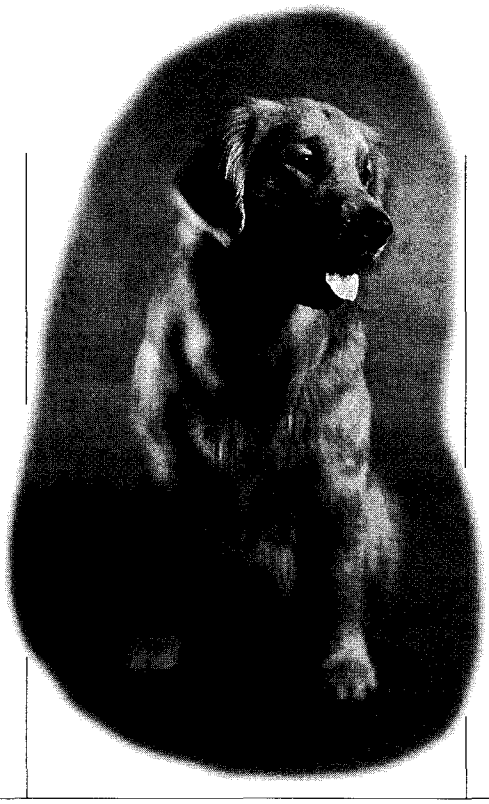

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(Mich.) got Commerce; and Joe Scarborough (Fla.) got Education.

"Big," is how one budget aide describes the effects of their effort. "They're the guys putting together the proposals, the guys beating the drums on it. I think that they'll have a lot of impact on keeping the momentum going on it." The momentum increased a few torques when Dole (after a chat with Brownback) endorsed the idea in a March speech. Dole appointed Spencer Abraham (Mich.), the sparkplug of the Senate's freshman class, and Lauch Faircloth (N.C.) to head a task force on the issue, and soon Dole aides were in contact with the House freshmen to try to bring the House and Senate into lockstep. "It'd be nice for once," says a Senate aide.

The idea was to get the elimination of the first two departments into the Senate and House budget resolutions (in the Senate, that goal was a department too far, but the House went even further). The resolutions—reconciled and voted on sometime before Memorial Day—set the spending levels in broad areas of the budget. The authorizing committees then have to write laws to comply with the spending caps. It's for the use of these committees that the House freshmen hope by the end of May to have thick pieces of model legislation on how to effect the elimination of Commerce, Energy, Education, and HUD. The Senate eliminators—gunning for an eventual total of six departments—are making a parallel effort with the Labor and Transportation Departments. If one or two departments go in this budget cycle, runs the theory, then two more can go later in the year, and perhaps a final two or three sometime after that.

COMMERCE is the easiest target, the one that House and Senate eliminators first agreed should go on the chopping block. The 100-year-old department has become, according to its own inspector general, "a loose collection of more than 100 programs." It shares its missions with at least 71 other federal entities. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, which uses almost 40 per cent of Commerce's staff, could be split off and transferred elsewhere, while the department's many entities designed to promote new technologies, exports, and other matters best left to the market could be eliminated altogether. Potential savings from scrapping the department and dispersing its functions total at least $7 billion over several years.

Beyond Commerce it gets trickier. Energy should have been just as easy, except that New Mexico, home of Senate Budget Committee Chairman Pete Domenici, has two huge federal labs, Los Alamos and Sandia, which Domenici has made a career of protecting. They would be likely to survive the death of Energy—perhaps getting funding instead from the Department of Defense—but Domenici was skittish. His resistance helped keep Energy off the Senate's list of departments to be eliminated. The alternative, going after HUD, is less appealing because the department has many contractual obligations to housing authorities and offers little in the way of short-term savings. And HUD has its own high-profile ally: Kit Bond (Mo.), chairman of the relevant Senate subcommittee.

However it shakes out, Republicans are about to take a step emblematic of Washington's new paradigm. When there was an "energy crisis" in the 1970s, President Carter's natural recourse was a new federal department. Now the old thinking that a Commerce Department must mean better commerce, an Energy Department better energy, and so on, has been routed (although not completely—as the GOP may find with Education). The new equation is that more Washington government most likely just means more bureaucracy.

How does it all play back home? At a recent town-hall meeting in Sam Brownback's district a woman stood up just to let the congressman know: she loves Senator Dole's idea of abolishing four federal departments. □

Will They Ever Learn?

CHESTER E. FINN JR.

WASHINGTON, D.C.

NO WONDER senior Administration officials looked for technical grounds to suppress the report altogether and, when that gambit failed, dispatched only a veteran civil servant to the press conference and crafted the education secretary's bland statement to make as little news as possible. The news was none too welcome at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue: the first report on U.S. school performance during the Clinton Presidency showed that students are learning less. High-school seniors, in particular, could not read as well in 1994 as in 1992—and the results were far from satisfactory in 1992.

No, we cannot lay all the blame for the decline at Mr. Clinton's doorstep. Federal policy affects American schools only at the margin, and most of 1994's high-school graduates had entered first grade during Reagan's first term. Yet the new results from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) leave plenty of egg on the incumbents' faces. President Clinton and Education Secretary Dick Riley have been trying to make their legislative successes in education—six sizable bills pushed through Congress in the past 18 months—into a political and programmatic triumph and a reason to keep them in office. They have threatened to veto cuts in the education budget devised by the GOP majority. They have proclaimed that nobody took education reform seriously until they came to Washington. They have even asserted—Riley said it in a February speech—that U.S. education is, "at long last, turning the corner, moving from being a nation at risk to a nation with a hopeful future."

Would that it were so. Yet Secretary Riley's Panglossian talk got more press coverage than the reading results his department released the other day. The media have tired of the "education crisis" story and have concluded that only good news should be reported in this domain. Thus the *Washington Post* ignored the latest evidence altogether; the *New York Times* ran a small wire-service story. The television networks, having no famous face to put on the screen, were mute. (*USA Today*, to its credit, put the story on the front page.)

Mr. Finn is John M. Olin Fellow at the Hudson Institute and a member of the National Assessment Governing Board. From 1985 to 1988 he served as assistant secretary of education.

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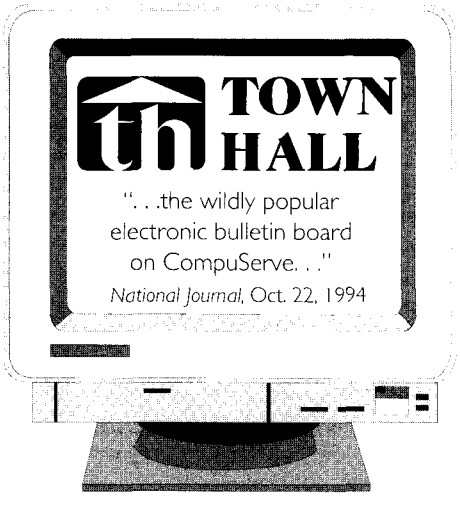

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Bill Clinton ran for President as an "education governor." He plainly intends to run for re-election as the nation's first genuine education President. It's in his interest that U.S. education be seen to improve on his watch. That will justify all the spending, all the big-government legislation (such as the hugely controversial Goals 2000 program), all the mischief undertaken in the name of civil-rights enforcement, all the speeches on college campuses and the chicken nuggets eaten with schoolchildren. The illusion of progress will also fire up the big teachers' unions once again to shower money, energy, endorsements, and votes on Clinton's candidacy. And it's a handy club with which to pound Republicans: I'm good for education, children, and other living things, while you're a bunch of skinflints who would take the food out of their mouths, the pencils off their desks, and the opportunities out of their future.

BUT the facts are inconvenient for those who want to claim that things are good and getting better. Yes, math scores rose a bit in 1992. (That test was given six months before the election.) But the 1994 reading scores are woeful. Only one high-school senior in three was a "proficient" reader in 1994, i.e., functioning at the level that the National Assessment Governing Board says all youngsters should reach. Almost as many—30 per cent—were "below basic," significant erosion from 1992's 25 per cent. "Below basic" means essentially non-functional as readers, even though the young people taking the test were within a few months of graduating. And that means last year's graduation ceremonies dumped about 750,000 more semi-literate 18-year-olds into the work force with high-school diplomas clutched in their fists. (Out of 2.5 million graduates, only about 100,000 were reading at "advanced" or "world class" levels.)

For minority youngsters—a matter of no little political significance for Clinton—the news is still bleaker; only 12 per cent of black high-school seniors are "proficient" readers, fewer than 1 per cent are "advanced," and 54 per cent are "below basic." (The corresponding figures for Hispanic students are 1 per cent advanced, 18 per cent proficient, and 48 per cent below basic.) Young people who read so poorly are simply not qualified for most of today's jobs, much less for college. Put that in your affirmative-action pipe and smoke it.

But weak performance is by no means confined to poor and minority youngsters or inner-city schools. In upscale Montgomery County, Maryland, where nearly everybody graduates from high school and 86 per cent go on to higher education, the local community college found last fall that 71 per cent of students entering from the county schools were deficient in math and half failed to meet the English standards. "When I saw the size of the numbers," complained newly elected county executive Douglas Duncan (a Democrat), "I was shocked. I had to ask, 'Why hasn't somebody done something about this?'"

Especially awkward for the Clinton Administration (and perhaps also for almost-candidate Pete Wilson) is California's dreadful showing in the NAEP results. In the state that Clinton needs most to carry in the next election, the place he goes to visit on alternate Tuesdays, fourth-graders now read worse than their counterparts in Mississippi. They scored second from the bottom in 1994, surpassing only Louisiana. (In general, the state NAEP results continue to bear out Pat Moynihan's dictum that educational achievement in the U.S. correlates with proximity to the Canadian border.)

California's crummy performance cannot be explained away by demography, for even *within* racial and socio-economic categories the Golden State's children fared miserably: last among whites, fourth from last among blacks, last among Hispanics, third from last among Asians, fourth from last among pupils with at least one parent who completed college. Nor is this just an artifact of the federal test: a few weeks earlier, the state released the 1994 results on its (now defunct) California Learning Assessment System. Only 23 per cent of fourth-graders were reading satisfactorily; just 28 per cent were proficient in math.

Researchers will dine well for years on the grants they'll receive to analyze and explain such sorry performance. (One plausible hypothesis that most of them will shun is that California has led the nation in introducing trendy "new math" and "whole language" curricula into its primary schools.) But America's education meltdown is no secret. That research has been done to a fare-thee-well, and our allies and competitors are keenly aware of our deteriorating human capital.

The Paris-based Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) conducted one of its periodic "economic surveys" of the United States last year, and concluded that, while our higher-education system remains a "major competitive strength," "the effectiveness of the primary and secondary education system . . . can broadly be characterized as mediocre."

Another recent OECD report gives the lie to those who still argue that what ails U.S. education is lack of money. Our outlay per public-school pupil was estimated by OECD statisticians at $6,010 in 1992, ahead of all 21 of the other reporting countries—Austria ranked second at $5,490—and way ahead of the OECD country mean of $4,180.

Though a couple of nations pay their teachers more than we do, none save Hungary employs a higher percentage of the labor force in its education system. In the U.S. 6.2 per cent of the labor force works in educational institutions; the OECD average is 5.2 per cent. What's striking is that fewer than half of these Americans are *teachers*. Ours is the only country in the industrial world where the majority of school employees are "support staff." (Of course, that explains how we can spend the most per pupil and yet not pay the highest teacher salaries.)

WE'RE simply not getting our money's worth. Secretary Riley to the contrary notwithstanding, U.S. schools haven't turned any big corners. If we didn't have a vast college and university system to repair some of their graduates' shortcomings (at enormous cost in time, money, and efficiency), we'd be in perilous shape indeed.

No doubt the Clintonites will continue to claim credit for reviving American education. They will insist that the dozens of new federal programs and regulations launched on their watch are making a difference, and will beat up anyone who says differently. For all of this they will be applauded, praised, and probably rewarded at the polls by the education establishment. But nobody else should be fooled. □

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RANDOM WALK

HAS the Contract with America been good for stocks? Yes and no, says Prudential Securities' Charles Gabriel. Obviously, reducing the deficit by $500 billion is decidedly bullish. But the reality is that the cuts approved so far have been minuscule. House Republicans have rammed through measures that rescind $20 billion in discretionary spending for the remaining six months of the fiscal year. About $9 billion of this has already been earmarked for California disaster relief and Pentagon peacekeeping operations, leaving net savings of $11 billion.

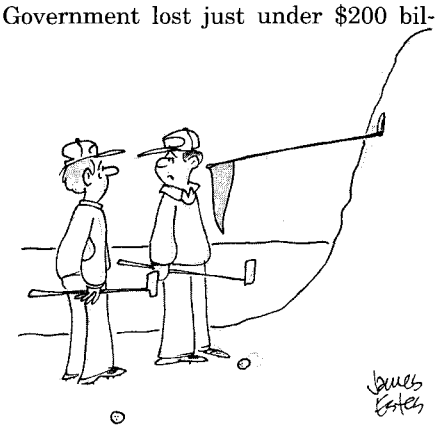
If such a small step can trigger such a gnashing of teeth, will stock-market bulls ever get out of the pen? Definitely, says Gabriel. The 1995 spending cuts are a "gift that keeps on giving," lowering the budget baseline for all succeeding years. In fact, the House GOP has already endorsed $190 billion in cuts, fulfilling a pledge to offset the costs of tax cuts promised in the Contract. Moreover, this $190-billion spending reduction is actually worth $280 billion when scored according to the rules that have governed budget deliberations for the last two decades and that the Clinton Administration employed in the 1996 budget. The result: we're more than halfway to a balanced budget in 2002—much more if, as Gabriel expects, the Contract's tax cuts are ultimately whittled down.

Yet Gabriel worries that putting major federal corporate-welfare programs "in play" could hurt equities. This is particularly a problem for energy, agribusiness, and transportation stocks—industries fingered by both the Cato Institute and the moderate Democratic Public Policy Institute as the largest beneficiaries of federal tax and spending subsidies. By taking on corporate welfare, the GOP is positioning itself to become the party of small business and Main Street. After all, the little guys aren't plugged in to the corporate-welfare loop—they can't afford the lobbyists. To the small-business community, a cut in capital-gains taxes takes precedence over all other initiatives, which is why Gabriel expects such a measure to be adopted this fall, even if all other tax-cut proposals are jettisoned entirely.

Meanwhile, Democrats are arguably evolving into spokesmen for the Fortune 500 and Wall Street crowd, both declining sectors of the economy. Their strategy of sandbagging capital-gains tax cuts while daring the Republicans to cut corporate goodies may turn out to be a classic case of "be careful what you wish for."

■ On May 4, the *Wall Street Journal* ran a front-page story under the headline, "Amid Record Profits, Companies Continue to Lay Off Employees." Ah, music to my capitalist ears. Actually, there was nothing new here: only the umpteenth story on corporate downsizing in the 1990s. But the headline I'm still eagerly awaiting is this: "Amid Record Losses, Government Continues to Hire Employees."

That headline would be accurate. Consider this: last year the Federal Government lost just under $200 billion, but it hired some 600,000 additional workers. Meanwhile, corporate profits rose by 11 per cent in 1994, but employment shrank by half a million. Quick, which sector is experiencing negative productivity?



"This is a very difficult hole."

The public sector has proved itself remarkably immune from the productivity forces that are transforming American industry. Last month *Business Week* calculated the performance of American firms in a number of key industries between 1990 and 1995. I summarize *Business Week*'s results, adding government to the list for comparison.

TRENDS IN KEY INDUSTRIES
(1990–95)

	Employment	Productivity
Steel	–15%	+29%
Chemicals	–7%	+17%
Computers	–20%	+152%
Semiconductors	0%	+83%
Telecom.	–7%	+33%
Energy	–17%	+20%
Banking	–5%	+12%
Autos	+6%	+18%
Government	+7%	negative?

■ John Roach, president of Tandy Corp., recently complained about the excessive bureaucracy in Washington. "Businesses have been restructuring for the last decade," he insists. "Now it's time for the government to start." Don't hold your breath, John. The Institute for Policy Innovation in Lewisville, Texas, recently released a booklet aptly titled *Government: America's #1 Growth Industry*. It reveals that the U.S. public sector employs about half a million more workers than the entire manufacturing sector. Industry is producing more with less. Government is producing less with more.

But wait. Wasn't Al Gore's celebrated reinventing government plan (or REGO, as the nerds in the White House call it) going to solve this problem? It will—if Gore remains Vice President for the next half-century or so. Efficiency expert Peter Drucker has calculated that Mr. Gore will be fortunate if his reinvention efforts cut government costs and bureaucracy by even 0.2 per cent. Part of the problem is that Gore wants to reinvent a lot of government programs that never should have been invented in the first place. —GEKKO

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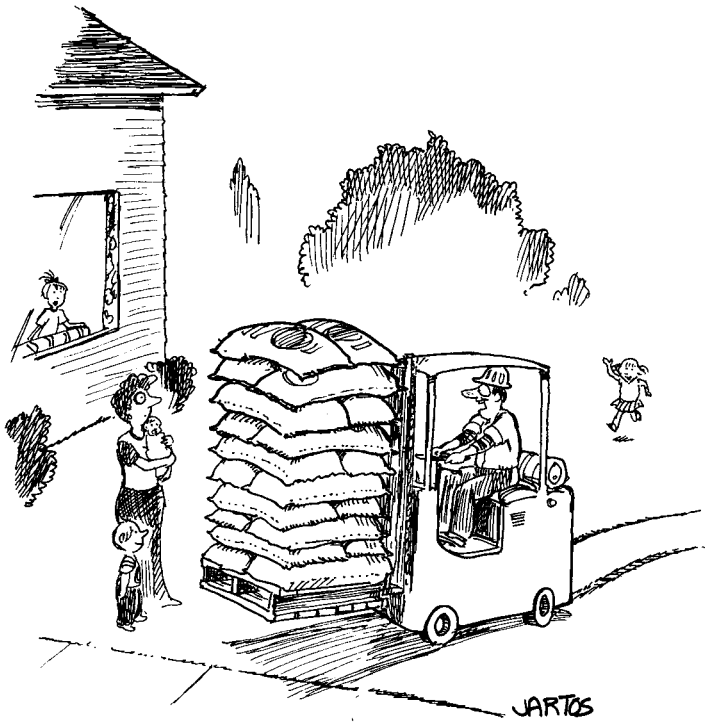
help

Ginger Rogers: In Memoriam

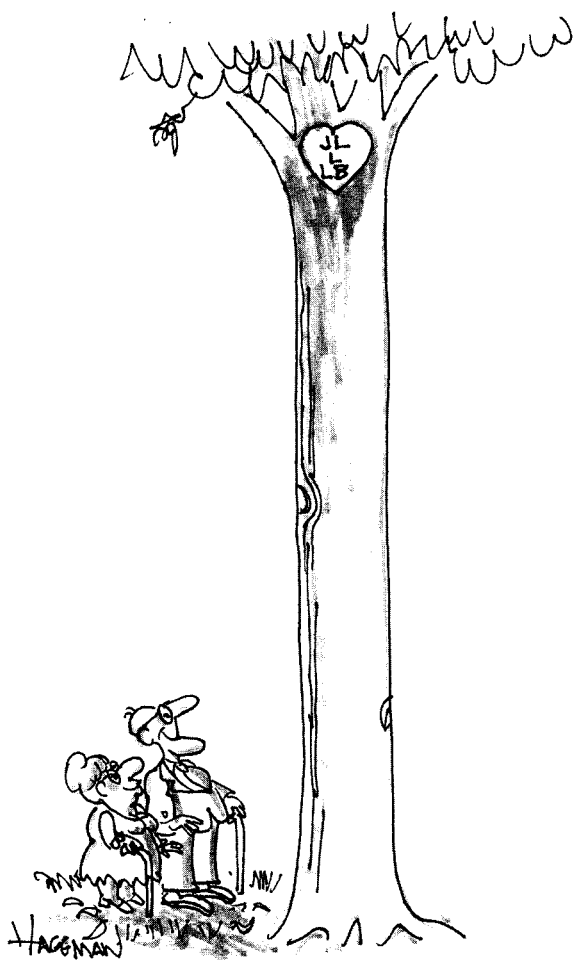
Fashioned
for remembrance,
her lovely form and face,
and all her singularity
of grace.

GLORIA A. MAXSON



"There I am working away, when suddenly it hits me. I haven't been spending enough time with my family!"

"A token, Ms. Bonardi. Your acceptance, of course, obligates you in no way . . ."



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HELLO?... PRESIDENT CLINTON?... WOULD YOU MIND ASKING MR. GORE TO TONE DOWN HIS RHETORIC?
The News
UNABOMBER IS ANTI-INDUSTRY ENVIRONMENTAL RADICAL!
Mike Luckovich
Cox The Orange County Register

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The Myth of 'Zero-Emission' Vehicles

ELECTRIC AVENUE

Given current technology, electric cars are not practical or cost-effective. They may even increase air pollution. But state governments are mandating them anyway.

MICHAEL McKENNA

HOW would you like to pay $100,000 for your next car? Not a Mercedes, mind you, but a car that you can't drive more than a hundred miles at a time (less than that in bad weather); a car that will cost you $30,000 in repairs over its lifetime; a car that would have to sacrifice driving range for luxuries like air conditioning, power windows, and power steering; and a car that, while intended to reduce pollution, may perversely lead to more. If environmental extremists get their way, this is the car of the future. They have already bullied California's legislature into requiring automakers to sell such cars; the logical next step is to force Californians to buy them.

Why should citizens in the vast, sensible heartland care about an electric-car mandate in California? For one thing, the Federal Government, cheered on by enthusiasts such as Vice President Al Gore, is using taxpayers' money to subsidize electric vehicles. The U.S. Department of Energy is spending $260 million a year in an attempt to make batteries for these vehicles more efficient. Furthermore, to spread the economic penalties, Congress has approved a 10 per cent federal income-tax credit for anyone irrational enough to buy an electric vehicle.

Apart from the public costs, there are the costs that private companies are incurring to meet the requirements of command-and-control environmentalism. Ford, for instance, estimates that it will spend $2 billion over the next four years to meet the California mandate. The other automakers will probably spend similar amounts. These expenditures will divert resources from more worthwhile activities. Furthermore, electric vehicles will cost as much as five times what internal-combustion vehicles now cost to produce. To attract buyers, automakers may have to sell them below cost and cover the loss by raising the prices of conventional vehicles. Competition is unlikely to deter such cross-subsidization because every major automaker has to meet the mandate. Given the size of the California market, we will all pay more for cars because of one state's mistake.

And other states are following California's example. Eight states, including New York and Massachusetts, already have laws mandating the sale of electric vehicles. The Ozone Transport Commission—a body created by the Clean Air Act amendments of 1990 and consisting of representatives from 12 Northeastern states and the District of Columbia—has asked the Environmental Protection Agency to require member states to mandate cleaner cars, possibly including electric vehicles.

The Making of a Totem

THE electric car is so firmly entrenched as a totem of environmentalists and technocrats that uncomfortable facts are disregarded. Last year the EPA released a draft report showing that the cars are not "zero-emission," as they are advertised to be. Indeed, in some circumstances, they are likely to increase overall emissions. Despite this finding, the California Air Resources Board reaffirmed its commitment to the electric-car mandate the very next month.

The mandate originated in a 1989 recommendation from the South Coast Air Quality Management District (SCAQMD), the organization established by the California state government to "solve" Southern California's air-quality problem. The legislature turned the recommendation into a mandate calling for 2 per cent of the vehicles sold in 1998 to be "zero-emission vehicles." That requirement grows to 10 per cent, representing about 125,000 cars, by 2003.

Mr. McKenna is policy and planning director at the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality. The views expressed in this article are his own.

ILLUSTRATION BY HENRY PAYNE

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At the time, it seemed like a simple solution: electric cars don't pollute; conventional cars do. Happily for the environmentalists, the one group in a position to provide probative data on the likely emissions resulting from electric vehicles was California's utilities, which had a vested interest in the electric-car mandate. They were not eager to share any information that did not bolster the case for electric cars.

The California utilities are so eager for the added profits promised by the mandate that they are spurring the environmentalists on by converting their own fleets—at ratepayers' expense—to electricity. Dan Fitzgerald, a spokesman for Pacific Gas and Electric, was impolitic enough to explain that the payoff for this PR investment will be the recharging of millions of vehicles at night, when utilities have excess generating capacity. He estimated that the mandate will bring California's utilities an additional $200 million annually by 2005. "One of the ways we're proposing to help manage this load so that it is off-peak is we are developing an electric-vehicle rate that we're proposing to put in place in 1995," he said. "And what that will do will provide for very low-cost refueling during our off-peak periods." A utility's dream: hundreds of thousands of captive customers paying for electricity that the utility has to generate anyway but for which it currently has no buyers.

This alliance of environmentalists and monopolists has taken on national dimensions. One of the most consistent supporters of electric-vehicle mandates has been the Edison Electric Institute (EEI), the lobbying arm of the nation's electric utilities. The EEI has signed a memorandum of understanding with the Department of Energy to reduce emissions of carbon dioxide and other "greenhouse gases." As part of that effort, the utilities are contributing $150 million to a fund to develop technologies that may help reduce emissions, including—you guessed it—electric cars.

Utilities' efforts to chisel out a market for electric cars take many forms. Con Edison in New York and Northeast Utilities in Connecticut are paying for the privilege of demonstrating the Ford Ecostar. Arizona Public Service sponsors an annual electric-car race. In California, utilities are offering rebates for electric cars and public refueling stations. The costs of these projects are borne by captive ratepayers, not by the utilities' shareholders.

Diane Wittenberg, manager of electric transportation at Southern California Edison, says the electric-car mandate will ultimately lead to lower rates, since the cost of utility infrastructure will be spread over a larger base of ratepayers. But for the time being the mandate will remove motorists from the reasonably well-functioning retail gasoline market and tie them to the dysfunctional, monopolistic retail electricity market. While gasoline prices have been flat or falling over the last two decades, electricity rates have steadily increased from a national average of 4.8 cents per kilowatt-hour in 1969 to 5.6 cents in 1992 (in 1987 dollars).

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And this is not likely to change for the better in the short term. Trends toward deregulation in the last 15 years, encouraged and strengthened by the Energy Policy Act of 1992, will probably result in much higher rates for retail customers. This is because large industrial users of electricity, who currently subsidize small users like households, will soon be able to purchase their power from generators other than the local utility. Households, which do not enjoy the same purchasing power as factories and large office complexes, will be left paying for the costs of their local utility's sunk investment. In fact, the California Public Utility Commission just instituted a new regulatory regime that will lead to precisely this situation. Ominously, California's residential electricity rates are already about 50 per cent higher than the national average.

Electric-car users will also face performance problems. GM's Impact, likely to be the first mass-produced electric vehicle, has a range of about one hundred miles. The environmentalists like to note that when GM asked for volunteers to test-drive the Impact, they got 9,300 in Los Angeles and 14,000 in New York, more than twice as many as they expected. But the volunteers were not being asked to buy the cars, which retail for about $100,000, or to replace the batteries, which cost about $15,000 and need to be replaced every forty thousand miles or so.

The Ford Ecostar, a converted minivan, employs sodium–sulphur batteries rather than traditional lead–acid batteries. It also has a range of about one hundred miles. The Ecostar will sell for about $100,000, but Ford officials privately concede that they will lose money at that price. The Ecostar will take about 7 hours to recharge on a 220-volt circuit, about 27 hours on the more common 110-volt circuit. The sodium–sulphur batteries are a bit peskier than lead–acid batteries. If you leave them unplugged for more than 12 hours, you might not be able to recharge them. One severe blackout, and in addition to spoiled meat, you lose your $15,000 battery. Even if you can keep them charged, the Ecostar's batteries need to be replaced every three to five years.

Chrysler's entry in the electric-vehicle market is the TEVan. Its price is also about $100,000, and it has a range of about seventy miles. The TEVan uses conventional lead–acid batteries—which, in fairness to the Ecostar's sodium–sulphur batteries, can become useless if the temperature falls below a certain point.

Alcohol Haze

ON APRIL 28 a federal appeals court ruled that the Environmental Protection Agency may not mandate the sale of gasoline mixed with ethanol. Although the Clean Air Act amendments of 1990 empower the EPA to set standards for reformulated gasoline, the EPA overstepped its authority, the court said, by requiring that 30 per cent of such fuel include ethanol.

The ethanol mandate illustrates how environmentalism has become a vehicle for dishing out pork while harming consumers, taxpayers—and the environment. Although the mandate seems dead for now, it could be revived by Congress, where Senate Majority Leader Robert Dole is a big supporter. The issue will be a test of whether the Republicans are serious about basing environmental policy on sound science.

The Clean Air Act amendments call for the wintertime use of fuels with added oxygen to reduce carbon-monoxide levels. In theory, an "oxygen boost" assists in complete combustion of gasoline. These reformulated fuels are to be used in 10 cities and in portions of 14 states.

The petroleum industry's principal response to the oxygenation requirements was to use methyl tertiary butyl ether (MTBE), an additive made from methanol that was already in wide use as an octane enhancer in place of lead. By 1994 the petroleum industry had significantly increased its production of MTBE, from about 10.9 billion pounds in 1992 to about 24 billion pounds in 1993. But MTBE has an odor that many people find offensive, and there are unresolved questions about its possible health effects. In Fairbanks, Alaska, high MTBE levels were found in the blood of people who reported headaches, nausea, and throat and eye irritations, prompting Governor Walter J. Hickel to request an EPA exemption from the use of MTBE.

Ethanol, however, does not seem to be a promising substitute. The reaction of volatile organic compounds, nitrogen oxides, and sunlight is a major cause of smog. Organic compounds are considerably more volatile in gasoline mixed with ethanol than in gasoline mixed with MTBE. Furthermore, ethanol use in automobiles produces acetaldehyde, a precursor to PAN (peroxyacetyl nitrate), which is known to be harmful to plants, as well as a probable cause of cancer. One of the highest PAN levels in the world occurs in Rio de Janeiro because of Brazil's push to use ethanol in automobiles.

But surely the harmful environmental consequences of oxygenated fuels are outweighed by their usefulness in reducing carbon-monoxide levels? Unfortunately, they don't seem to be doing so. In April 1993, *Chemical and Engineering News* reported research by a team at the University of Colorado, Denver, on the effects of using oxygenated fuels in Colorado's Front Range area. The oxygenated-fuels program is estimated to have cost the drivers in this area, which includes Denver, Colorado Springs, and Fort Collins, $14 million a year in higher fuel prices alone. Carbon-monoxide levels have fallen, but when a careful statistical analysis takes into account the fact that the automobile stock over the

Mr. Bolch is Robert McCallum Professor of Economics and Mr. Lyons is Professor Emeritus at Rhodes College. Their latest book is Apocalypse Not: Science, Economics, and Environmentalism *(Cato).*

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Electric-car cheerleaders are quick to point out that new technologies can cut the time needed to recharge the batteries. It's true that in tests such technologies have shown a great deal of promise, recharging cars in 15 to 18 minutes rather than the hours usually required. But the outlets used for rapid recharging would cost about $50,000, and rapid recharging uses far more energy than conventional recharging. The wiring in new houses would probably be adequate for such systems, but older houses would have to be refitted at a cost of $800 to $2,000 each.

Moreover, if a significant proportion of electric-car owners want to rapidly recharge (or even conventionally recharge) their batteries while they're at work during the day, instead of at night as the utilities imagine, much more electricity will be needed on the grid. This will require more power plants. And because such recharging will happen during periods of peak electricity use, rates will go up for everyone. Additional power plants will almost certainly be peaking units—units that are fired up only when demand spikes upward. These units customarily burn natural gas or, in the Northeast, oil. Their pollution controls are usually less thorough than those of the baseload units that run 24 hours a day. This problem will be especially severe during the hottest days of the summer, when smog formation is most likely (and most troublesome), and during times when inversion layers form, bringing brown clouds to places like Los Angeles and Denver. On especially hot and especially cold days, many utilities in the Northeast run at or near full capacity, even with their peaking units on line. Citizens in Washington, D.C., will remember that the city had to close during a particularly brutal cold snap last year—not because of the cold per se, but because of lack of generating capacity. Electric vehicles are likely to magnify such problems.

The EPA draft study notes that the amount of power-plant emissions resulting from the use of electric vehicles will depend on several factors, including the source of the power, the fuel used to generate it, and emission-control standards for both autos and power plants. For example, if a peaking unit in the Northeast that burns residual oil is turned on to provide juice to electric vehicles on a hot summer day, it is almost sure to cause more pollution than the vehicles it supplies will avoid. In a typical case—a coal-fired baseload unit in moderate weather—the draft study indicates that the first generation of electric vehicles is likely to result in significantly higher

peroid studied changed to one with cleaner-burning engines, the carbon-monoxide drop that can be attributed to oxygenated fuels becomes statistically insignificant. Ambient carbon-monoxide levels had begun to fall well before the use of oxygenated fuels. Thus the TV ads of Archer Daniels Midland (the major producer of ethanol in the United States) hyping the wonders of ethanol in the Denver area should be heavily discounted.

Furthermore, the data suggest that the use of oxygenated fuels may have increased the ambient levels of formaldehyde (a known carcinogen produced by MTBE) in the Front Range area. Data from Albuquerque indicate an increase of atmospheric organic acids because of the use of ethanol. The University of Colorado report agreed with a 1992 report by the Colorado legislature that found "limited benefits" from the use of oxygenated fuels.

In short, there is little evidence that the oxygenated-fuels program is doing any environmental good, or that ethanol is superior to MTBE. To date, the main effects of the oxygenated-fuels program have been increases in taxes, in the cost of gasoline, and in noxious pollutants.

BUT ethanol has one politically positive attribute: it can be used to subsidize farms. The leading defenders of the ethanol mandate in the Senate, where an attempt to derail it failed last year, are from the Midwest or have logrolling obligations to the grain-producing states. (The mandate went so far as to specify that the ethanol was to be made from nothing but grain, even though ethanol made from water and ethylene in a refinery is chemically identical and can be produced at a fraction of the cost.) Last year's debate was nonpartisan, with Democrats Bill Bradley (N.J.) and J. Bennett Johnston (La.) leading the opposition. Bradley opposed the mandate on environmental and economic grounds, pointing out that ethanol already enjoys a 54-cent-per-gallon subsidy and that the mandate would cost consumers hundreds of millions of dollars a year. A. B. Early, environmental-quality program director for the Sierra Club, argued that the mandate would increase the potential for smog and air toxins.

The voting ended in a tie, with Vice President Albert Gore casting the decisive vote in favor of the ethanol requirement. Ethanol boosters like Mr. Gore and Senator Dole argue that it is a renewable resource and that it releases less carbon dioxide (a "greenhouse gas") into the environment than does gasoline. But since the days when ethanol was touted as a solution to the "energy crisis," many scientists have noted that grain-based ethanol actually consumes more energy than it produces, once you take into account the energy used to make and transport fertilizer and other chemicals, till the soil, harvest the grain, convert the grain to sugar, distill the dilute alcohol resulting from fermentation, and so on. A similar analysis of the total production process refutes the idea that overall carbon-dioxide emissions are lower with ethanol than with gasoline.

There is one clearly renewable aspect to the ethanol mandate: it would create a demand among grain growers and ethanol processors for its own perpetual renewal. But surely there are less expensive ways to subsidize the ethanol lobby.

—Ben W. Bolch & Harold Lyons

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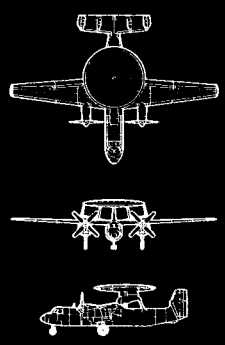

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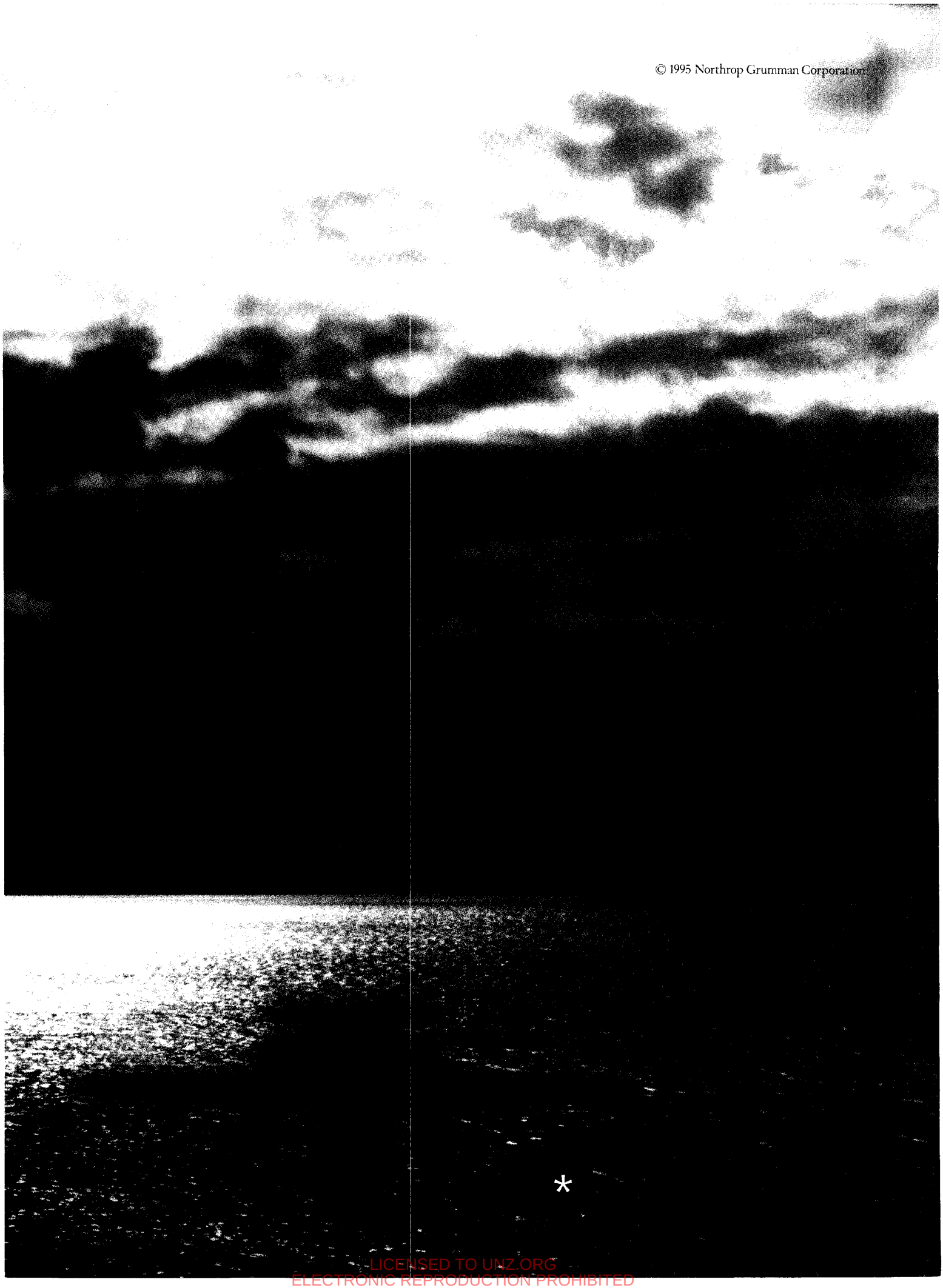

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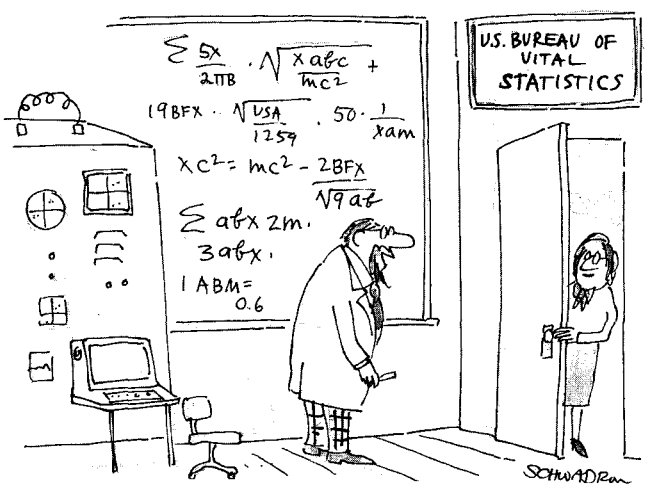
emissions than the current generation of gasoline-powered cars. For example, a new gasoline-powered automobile emits about 354 grams of carbon dioxide and 1.18 grams of nitrogen oxides (increasingly viewed as the real culprits in smog formation) per mile. An electric car powered by a lead–acid battery, by contrast, would be responsible for increased power-plant emissions of about 393 grams of carbon dioxide and 1.49 grams of nitrogen oxides per mile. In the next generation, these disparities will grow. The new internal-combustion vehicles required by the California regime, which would be powered by fuels like natural gas and reformulated gasoline, would emit only about 315 grams of carbon dioxide and 0.25 gram of nitrogen oxides per mile.

The EPA is not alone in its skepticism. The Department of Energy projected in an interim study that emissions of nitrogen oxides and carbon dioxide would vary dramatically by region. Certain combinations of factors could result in significant overall reductions, while others could result in substantial overall increases. In situations where the utilities are already running flat-out during the summer and would have to turn to peaking units to accommodate the additional load, or where utilities rely heavily on coal or oil, electric vehicles would lead to increased overall emissions. The department also found that, in all scenarios, emissions of sulphur dioxide would increase.

Two other points should be considered. First, premature mass introduction of electric vehicles will force electric-car buyers to struggle with the limitations of currently available models. This will delay consumer acceptance of electric vehicles when they are eventually ready for the marketplace. Second, by raising prices for new cars, mandates will encourage citizens to hold onto their older, less-efficient automobiles. Since fleet turnover has been the most effective means of pollution reduction (1994 models emit, on average, less than 5 per cent of the pollutants of 1974 models), this disincentive will hurt air quality.



"We'd better alert the press, Miss Marple. As it turns out, there's a sucker born every 0.6 minute."

Automakers, despite the co-opting of their establishment brethren in the utility business, remain openly skeptical about the market potential of cars that cost at least three times as much as current models, have limited driving ranges, lack accessories, and require replacement of the entire power plant two or three times over their useful lives. John Wallace, director of Ford's Electric Vehicle Planning and Program Office, puts the problem this way: "It's not hard to see that we can build an electric vehicle that's as cheap, or maybe even slightly cheaper than our current internal-combustion-engine vehicles, but it's very hard to see how I'm going to take a battery and have it compete in cost with a $50 fuel tank. The bottom line on cost is the battery." Pam Kueber, Ford's director of environmental communications, is more direct: "We have a mandate to sell electric vehicles. Unfortunately, there is no mandate to buy [them]."

Forcing Technology

IN DEFENSE of the attempt to force electric-car technology through a mandate, Jacqueline Shafer, chairman of the California Air Resources Board, notes that "by using tough anti-smog rules to force technological changes, tailpipe emissions have fallen 90 per cent in the past decade in the Los Angeles basin." This observation strikes at the heart of the problem. Despite the fact that emissions from tailpipes have dropped 90 per cent in the last decade alone, Los Angeles still suffers from a smog problem. Rational people would conclude that the problem is something other than auto emissions—such as a geography that traps emissions, whether from power plants or tailpipes. They might also conclude that, after removing 90 per cent of the tailpipe emissions with little in the way of results, we might not be well advised to spend enormous amounts of money to remove the last 10 per cent from that source.

But electric-car mandates have little to do with clean air or rationality. They grow out of a world view that despises industrial prowess and business success. The environmentalists are politically unable to outlaw internal-combustion engines, so they have adopted a strategy that focuses on the slow corrosion of the industry that produces them. Vice President Gore is not shy on this point. In *Earth in the Balance*, he suggests that perhaps the most important strategic goal of the environmental movement should be the elimination of the internal-combustion engine for transportation purposes.

Having bullied legislatures in the two most populous regions of the country into requiring electric vehicles, the extremists are unlikely to stop. After the failures of mass transit and fuel-efficiency standards, they have finally hit upon a successful tactic in their war against Detroit's industrial might and the American love of the automobile. Expect to see it used on a state legislature near you. □

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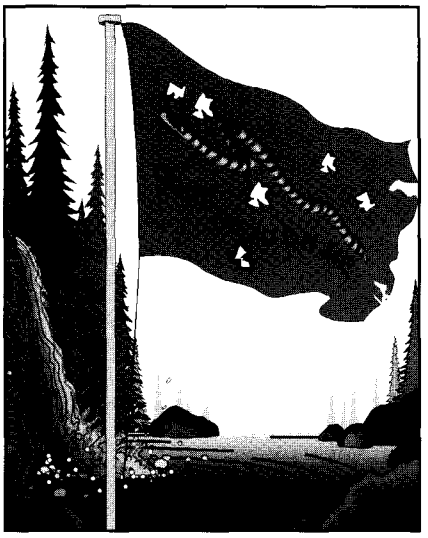

Is the Militia Movement a Threat?

WEEKEND WARRIORS

The militias claim to draw on venerable tradition, and they are fueled by anger about government abuses. Are they modern-day Minutemen? Harmless nuts? Or private armies spoiling for a fight?

ALAN W. BOCK

BEFORE the bombing in Oklahoma City the "citizens' militias" that have cropped up throughout the country in recent years had a reputation as harmless nuts with a penchant for paranoia and kooky conspiracy theories. Now they are widely seen as a serious threat to public order and safety.

The transformation from wacky to dangerous was triggered by alleged links between the militia movement and suspects in the Oklahoma City bombing. The evidence of these links so far is fragmentary and uncertain. Early press accounts reported that Timothy McVeigh, the young Army veteran charged in the case, was affiliated with the Michigan Militia. James and Terry Nichols, two brothers who are friends of McVeigh and have been detained as material witnesses, were said to have attended militia meetings.

But leaders of the Michigan Militia, which was officially founded in April 1994 and claims a membership of 12,000 statewide, say neither Timothy McVeigh nor the Nichols brothers are members of their organization. They say James Nichols, perhaps with his brother, came to one of the organization's public meetings but was asked to leave after he urged those attending to tear up their driver's licenses and stop paying taxes. The Militia of Montana reports that none of the three men's names appears in the databases listing militia members and sympathizers around the country. So the preliminary evidence suggests that if McVeigh and the Nichols brothers had a connection with the militia movement, it was as troublesome sympathizers rather than actual members.

Still, many people who share some of the militia movement's dislike of an increasingly intrusive Federal Government are disturbed by the idea of private armed groups engaging in organized military training. They may remember references to the role of the militias in the War of Independence, and they know that the word appears in the Second Amendment, which guarantees the right to keep and bear arms, but in terms that do not make absolutely clear whether the right is individual or corporate. But to many Americans the militia seems an archaic concept, out of place in a world of nuclear weapons and cruise missiles. Why has this concept been revived in the last few years, and why has it resonated with so many people?

Coming to Get You?

THE short answer is: Weaver, Waco, and Brady. To many Americans, that list symbolizes a Federal Government intent on preparing us for a New World Order in which U.S. sovereignty will be subordinated to the United Nations (or some successor organization) and our constitutional rights will cease to exist. Federal officials argue (see "The Week") that the popular accounts of Weaver and Waco are grossly exaggerated. And it's certainly true that these sorts of violent raids mostly appear to result from ineptitude, headline seeking, individual abuse of authority, or bureaucratic competition. But if it is hard to justify the militias' claim that these actions are part of some New World Order conspiracy, it is equally hard to justify the government's actions as the proper execution of legitimate authority.

Randy Weaver, a white separatist who lived in a secluded cabin in northern Idaho, was entrapped on a sawed-off-shotgun charge by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms, which then asked him to become a BATF spy within the racist Aryan Nation. He refused and was indicted. After Weaver failed to appear in court on the firearms charge, the Federal Government set up an elaborate 18-month surveillance operation that culminated on August 21, 1992, in a gun battle in which Weaver's 14-year-old son and a federal marshal were killed. During the ensuing 11-day standoff, Weaver's wife, Vicki, was killed, and Randy Weaver and his friend Kevin Harris were wounded. In the federal trial that followed, Weaver was acquitted of all charges except the failure-to-appear count. No charges have been brought in the deaths of his wife and son, but the local prosecutor is still investigating, and Weaver himself has brought a civil suit.

On April 19, 1993, while the Weaver trial was taking place, the Branch Davidian compound near Waco, Texas, burned to the ground during an assault by federal agents. The assault followed an initial BATF raid based on defective search and arrest warrants stemming from firearms charges. It

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left more than eighty people dead, including more than two dozen children.

It is, however, the Clinton Administration's success in passing the Brady Bill, requiring a waiting period for handgun purchases, and the more recent ban on "assault weapons" that make these violent confrontations seem less like the actions of rogue elements within particular agencies and more like part of a general effort by the Federal Government to remove all firearms from private hands. Certainly there are plenty of gun-control advocates who would like to see universal gun registration as a way-station toward an ultimate ban on the private ownership of firearms. In 1991, at a B'nai B'rith meeting in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, Janet Reno, then chief state prosecutor in Dade County, declared that "the most effective means of fighting crime in the United States is to outlaw the possession of any type of firearm by the civilian populace." Many people in positions of power share that view.

Miss Reno and others have defended the Weaver and Waco raids as instances of the government protecting other citizens from armed and dangerous extremists. But there have been a disturbing number of assaults by federal agents in recent years—resulting in lost property, damaged reputations, and occasional deaths—in which there was not even that justification. On October 2, 1992, Donald Scott, a reclusive millionaire in Malibu, California, was killed in an early-morning police raid apparently perpetrated with the intent of seizing his property under federal forfeiture law. The police had received a tip that Scott was growing marijuana; no plants were found. On May 6, 1992, a health clinic in Washington State was raided by armed agents of the Food and Drug Administration, who confiscated contraband vitamin B-12. Agents of the most unlikely federal agencies—the Bureau of Land Management, the Environmental Protection Agency, the Internal Revenue Service, the Immigration and Naturalization Service, the Forest Service—have taken to enforcing regulations with armed officers, sometimes in full combat regalia, often through surprise raids conducted in cooperation with local law-enforcement agencies. No federal agents have been tried or even indicted for any of the civilian deaths resulting from these paramilitary excursions.

The Original Militia

THIS isn't supposed to happen in America. Indeed, it was fear of such abuses that led the Founders to prefer a citizen militia to a standing army. Most of the early American patriots had served in organized militias during the War of Independence and knew how important those forces were to the colonists' victory. They also shared a conviction that standing armies in times of peace were dangerous to a free republic. They decided that the country should be protected by a militia composed of all able-bodied men, bringing their own weapons. The militia would be organized and trained at the local level and called up in times of need. In addition to guarding against invasion, the militia would serve as a check on the central government's power.

In *Federalist* Number 46, James Madison dealt with the fear of federal military domination: "Extravagant as the supposition is, let it, however, be made. Let a regular army, fully equal to the resources of the country, be formed; and let it be entirely at the devotion of the federal government: still it would not be going too far to say that the State governments with the people on their side would be able to repel the danger." After going through a "correlation of forces" calculation to demonstrate his case, Madison concluded: "Besides the advantage of being armed, which the Americans possess over the people of almost every other nation, the existence of subordinate governments, to which the people are attached *and by which the militia officers are appointed*, forms a barrier against the enterprises of ambition, more insurmountable than any which a simple government of any form can admit of." (Emphasis added.) Similar sentiments were expressed by, among others, Noah Webster, Justice Joseph Story (in his 1833 *Commentaries on the Constitution*), and even the centralizing Federalist Alexander Hamilton.

The Constitution provided for the militia to be called up, when necessary, to the service of the United States. The Militia Act of 1792 required "every free able-bodied white male citizen of the respective states, resident therein, who is or shall be of the age of 18 years and under the age of 45 years," to be enrolled in the militia and to be equipped with "a good musket," a bayonet, and 24 rounds of ammunition. That was the law until 1903, when Congress created the National Guard. The new law recognized both the "organized militia" (i.e., the National Guard) and the "unorganized militia, which consists of members of the militia who are not members of the National Guard or the Naval Militia" (i.e., all other able-bodied males). The Constitution, however, did not authorize the use of the militia outside the United States. In World War I, President Wilson was given the power to draft members of the organized militia into the regular army. In

"The doctor would like you all to know he just made a birdie on eighteen!"

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1933, the National Guard was explicitly made a part of the regular army. A 1990 Supreme Court decision made it clear that states can do little to resist a call by the President to send National Guard units overseas. But it noted that the states can have their own militias, separate from the National Guard, so long as they do not receive federal funds. Some two dozen states have residual militia organizations, sometimes used in natural disasters and the like, but few could be called well organized or well regulated.

The New Militias

IN THE early 1990s numerous groups calling themselves citizens' militias sprang up. They range from what are essentially civic organizations that do a little organized target practice on weekends to paramilitary groups led by people worried about the possibility that a master plan exists to subvert U.S. sovereignty, snatch the people's guns, and impose a UN-directed dictatorship. Some militia organizations hold their meetings openly, advertising in newspapers and welcoming all comers, while others are secretive. A few militia leaders associate or sympathize with racist groups, and racist and anti-Semitic organizers certainly see the militia movement as a recruiting opportunity. Many militia leaders, in turn, have gone out of their way to expel or otherwise dissociate themselves from people who seem to be animated by racist sentiments.

How many people are connected with some form of militia? Estimates range from ten thousand to millions. The true figure for members actively engaged in training is probably in the tens of thousands. In October 1994, the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith issued a report titled "Armed and Dangerous: Militias Take Aim at the Federal Government," outlining recent militia activity in 13 states. More recent estimates indicate that militia groups are active in at least 35 states and perhaps in all 50 by now; California alone has a dozen local groups. The militia groups have used fax networks and the Internet to get information to a large number of interested people in a short time, but the movement is decentralized. Some groups are strictly local, while others stay in contact with likeminded organizations elsewhere.

Most organizers stress the militias' essentially defensive character. John Trochmann is co-organizer of the Militia of Montana, which regularly attracts hundreds of people to informational meetings and is considered one of the most radical organized militias. Trochmann claims that the purpose of organizing the militia was not to provoke but rather to defuse confrontations like the Randy Weaver standoff. He says MOM is in regular contact with FBI and BATF agents as well as with local sheriffs and elected officials. And although Trochmann, along with several other MOM members, was recently arrested in Roundup, Montana, on charges of threatening government officials, it turned out to be a misunderstanding, and the charges were dropped.

The apparently well-organized Michigan Militia, which claims 12,000 members, has condemned the Oklahoma City bombing and stressed that neither McVeigh nor the Nichols brothers are members. Leaders of the militia say they do not countenance illegal activity. An incident last August illustrates some of the tensions. Three men in camouflage uniforms and with numerous weapons in their car were arrested at a late-night traffic stop in Fowlerville, Michigan, and released on bail. They didn't show up for their arraignment, but some thirty people claiming to be militia members did, taunting, insulting, and threatening the police. Michigan Militia Commander Norman Olson disavowed these people, saying they were part of an "underground group" and not militia members.

"We are a 'well-regulated' militia and will not let our people break the laws," Olson says. "Members are under strict orders not to carry weapons. We use the same procedures and regulations as the military."

That may be true of some organized militias, but is it true of all? And could the rhetoric and tactics used to recruit militia members inspire breakaway groups or loose cannons to initiate violence? On videotapes and in speeches around the country, militia leader Mark Koernke, a/k/a "Mark from Michigan," sounds calm and measured. But he also sounds quite certain that Multi-Jurisdictional Task Forces, the

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Financial Crimes Enforcement Network, the black helicopters seen near military bases, and foreign troops training in the U.S.—as well as the Weaver and Waco killings and new gun-control laws—are part of a well-orchestrated plan to steal American freedom and place the U.S. under UN control. He seems sure that new outrages are imminent and that action is needed *now* to avert the threat. It's not hard to imagine unstable people listening, absorbing, and deciding to do something crazy.

Legal Questions

THERE are also questions about the legal status of militias that resemble private armies. Most states have laws against organized armed groups operating without state sanction, and most citizens' militias, even those that have sought communication and cooperation with law-enforcement agencies, have steered clear of affiliation with state governments. Some advocates say the right to form a militia is based on the constitutional rights to peaceably assemble and to keep and bear arms. But the constitutional provisions and laws concerning militias refer to the whole of the people, subject to call-up by duly constituted authorities. They do not license private armies. And there is a certain tension between the militia's role as a check on the government and its role as a force for the government to direct in emergencies.

Furthermore, a militia that claims to represent the whole people should theoretically be open to membership for anyone who chooses to volunteer. Yet most militia groups reserve the right to exclude people who sound too radical or who are suspected of being undercover agents. Does that make them simply private organizations with no real right to call themselves militias and to partake in the tradition the word implies?

The militia movement has the potential to provoke violent confrontations. But it has arisen, at least in part, in response to violent confrontations in which federal law-enforcement agencies seem to have abused their powers. The best way to defuse the movement would surely be a serious congressional investigation of Waco, Weaver, and other incidents, followed by appropriate action—i.e., curbing federal agencies that overstep constitutional and statutory boundaries.

Before the Oklahoma City bombing, it seemed possible that Congress would do so. Hearings were scheduled to investigate abuses by the BATF and other agencies, and it seemed possible that Congress would vote to repeal the Brady Bill and the assault-weapons ban. In the wake of the bombing, the hearings and the gun-control votes have been put on hold. Republicans and Democrats have fallen all over one another in their eagerness to beef up the jurisdiction, power, numbers, and funding of the FBI and BATF. Yet giving the agencies that frighten so many Americans even more power hardly seems like a rational response—even to a sometimes irrational movement. □

Menace in Moscow, Calm in Kiev

BEARISH OUTLOOK

With Russia dominated by extremist politics, Ukraine is emerging as a post-Soviet source of stability.

ADRIAN KARATNYCKY

BOTH cities were on President Clinton's European itinerary: the capitals of Russia and Ukraine, the two largest countries to have emerged from the Soviet Union. But Moscow and Kiev increasingly appear to be moving along different paths. And despite the commercial and economic dynamism evident in Moscow, it is Kiev that is headed in the right direction.

Moscow appears to be booming. Scores of new shops sprout up monthly. Hundreds of expensive restaurants cater to the new Russian bourgeoisie. The price of caviar approaches its price in New York or Paris. Consumer goods abound, most of them of Western or Asian manufacture. Mercedeses, Jaguars, and Porsches are a regular sight on the New Arbat and on Tverskaya Street. Nightclubs with entrance fees ranging from $20 to $100 are packed to the rafters. By contrast, Kiev seems a sleepy outpost, with only a handful of opulent restaurants and smart shops to serve the new Ukrainian bourgeoisie. Workers in Kiev earn about $15 a month, less than a fifth of the average wage in Moscow.

In the Russian capital, all is excess. A wealthy elite has sprung up overnight as a result of the rapid move to a market economy. But this elite consists largely of former Communist apparatchiks who have benefited from the privatization of Russia's vast mineral and energy resources. Some of the original architects of reform worry that unless a strong entrepreneurial class soon emerges, the Russian economy will prove unable to continue growing. While some visitors see in Moscow the signs of a powerful economic engine, the rest of Russia lags far behind.

Furthermore, Russian politics is dominated by a variety of extremisms, each of them potentially threatening to Russia's neighbors and eager to challenge U.S. interests around the world. At home, under a strong, insular government built up by President Yeltsin, Russia prosecutes a murderous war in Chechnya that has claimed over 42,000 lives. Abroad, Russia seeks to build nuclear reactors for Iran, works to lift sanctions against Iraq, and plans to sell weapons to the Islamic fundamentalists who rule in Sudan.

In late March, Russian Defense Minister Pavel Grachev promoted Vladimir Zhirinovsky from captain to lieutenant colonel in the reserves in a bid to strengthen the government's links with the ultranationalists, who are expected to do well in December's parliamentary elections. Days after honoring Zhirinovsky, General Grachev told a

Mr. Karatnycky is president of Freedom House.

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garrison of nuclear-armed forces that "there have been attempts at military blackmail of Russia" and denounced the expansion of NATO into Eastern Europe. In mid April, the increasingly belligerent defense minister declared that "Russia cannot observe all the flank limitations" of the Conventional Forces in Europe treaty. On April 26, Russia announced that it was creating a 58th Army in the North Caucasus in violation of the CFE. Thus Boris Yeltsin's reformist Russia is doing something that would have been unthinkable for the USSR: openly violating a major international military treaty. As April drew to a close, a high Russian official charged American, German, and Japanese security services with a conspiracy to implicate Russia in the sale of nuclear fuel on the black market. Even Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev, once the West's favorite Russian, has threatened military force to protect ethnic Russians who reside in neighboring countries.

Sergei Yushenkov, a democrat who heads the Russian Duma's defense committee, sums up the trend this way: "The military–industrial complex and the generals are trying to dream up ways to . . . turn society on the path of militarization." The militaristic May 9 celebrations honoring the Red Army were part of that trend.

Week by week, the complexion of the Russian government and of President Yeltsin's inner circle changes for the worse, with growing influence by the military, the security forces, the military–industrial complex, the newly rich industrial *nomenklatura*, and the neo-Communists. Democrats such as Chief of Staff Sergei Filatov are isolated as a circle of former apparatchiks and former KGB officers controls the president's schedule.

In April President Yeltsin signed a new national-security law, restoring most of the functions performed by the KGB—including domestic surveillance—to the Federal Security Bureau. In February he appointed a leading member of the Communist Party to be his justice minister. Such an appointment would have been unthinkable just a year ago, for Russia's orthodox Communist Party is openly opposed to democracy. Although the Communists rejected this presidential olive branch, the appointment was aimed at political "stabilization"—a euphemism for co-opting the Communists while discarding the radical democrats. As part of the effort to shape a new political coalition, President Yeltsin has backed the creation of two new "centrist" parties, one led by Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin, who represents the gas and oil interests, the other by Parliamentary Speaker Ivan Rybkin, whose roots are in the agro-industrial elite.

The Kuchma Coalition

IN CONTRAST, Ukrainian President Leonid Kuchma has shaped a government in which democratic reformers play a pivotal role. Kuchma has assembled a team of radical economic reformers and young intellectuals who coexist with reform-oriented officials from the military–industrial elite and the security services. That team has laid the foundation for a far-reaching program of rapid privatization that already has reduced the budget deficit from nearly 30 per cent of GDP to 7.3 per cent, thereby securing a $1.9-billion credit from the International Monetary Fund. According to estimates by Western experts, Ukraine's economy is expected to grow by 5 per cent in 1995, Kuchma's first full year as president.

Ukraine has avoided the political violence prevalent in post-Soviet Russia. It has seen nothing like the gunplay associated with the November 1993 struggle between President Yeltsin and his parliament and vice president. And while Russia has pursued a brutal war against a separatist government in Chechnya, Ukraine's effort to deal with Crimea's separatist parliament has been characterized by restraint.

In Russia, Vladimir Zhirinovsky's extremist Liberal Democratic Party won nearly a quarter of the votes cast for political parties in the December 1993 elections, while Ukraine's neo-fascists won only 3 out of 450 parliamentary seats. In Moscow, one of President Yeltsin's democratic advisors told me, "If the Communists and ultra-nationalists capture the parliament and presidency, they will without question put Yeltsin on trial." Ukraine's Communists lack the vitriol of their Russian counterparts, despite their fierce opposition to many of President Kuchma's political and economic reforms.

Why has Ukraine not been prey to this sort of extremism? The leftist parliamentary speaker, Oleksander

H.L. Mencken

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Moroz, believes it is an outgrowth of the country's culture: "The fact that Ukraine is an interethnic state—with a Russian population of 11 million living alongside nearly 40 million Ukrainians—has meant that the entire country works to mute differences and avoid conflict. We have worked through the generations to seek consensus, to find ways for the two cultures to coexist. This has created the habit of compromise." His views are borne out by recent public-opinion polls, which show that, despite three years of economic privation, Ukraine's citizens remain unwilling to engage in strikes or street protests.

In Russia, meanwhile, some Yeltsin advisors say the people are waiting for him to "sober up" and once again take charge. Since the brutally inefficient invasion of Chechnya, however, the Russian people appear to have parted irrevocably with their president. In a March poll of likely voters who have formed an opinion, Yeltsin came in eighth among the possible presidential candidates, with 4.1 per cent. Leading the field was economic reformer Grigory Yavlinsky, with 15 per cent. Also finishing ahead of Yeltsin were Vladimir Zhirinovsky and General Aleksandr Lebed, with 8.2 per cent each. Communist leader Gennady Zyuganov and reformer Boris Fyodorov each stood at 6.8 per cent. And Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn and bitter Yeltsin rival Aleksandr Rutskoi also beat the incumbent, with 5.5 per cent apiece.

Because an election law requires each candidate to collect 1 million signatures, Russians will not see most of these names on the ballot. But one man with a distinct chance of becoming president is General Lebed, the charismatic nationalist who heads the 14th Russian Army in Moldova and is one of Russia's most popular political figures. Lebed has developed a reputation for incorruptibility, and he already has a mass movement behind him: the Congress of Russian Communities, an ultranationalist organization that "defends" the rights of ethnic Russians and Russian-speakers. Communist and Agrarian leaders make regular pilgrimages to Tiraspol, Moldova, to woo the general, who has a checkered and ominous past. He headed a military operation in Tbilisi, Georgia, on April 9, 1989, that took the lives of twenty civilian protestors, mainly women. He was a delegate from the Army to the 1990 Communist Party Congress, where he delivered a blistering attack on reformers like Aleksandr Yakovlev. Later, Lebed was part of the ultranationalist Communist Initiative Movement led by Viktor Anpilov. In Lebed's view, there has been "enough chasing after Western aid like a goat going after a carrot. It's time to get down to business."

That business may include imposing martial law to cope with rampant lawlessness. And it could go further. On April 12, Lebed asserted that, if NATO expands to include Poland and the Czech Republic, "World War III will begin. Civilized and uncivilized states will perish—everything and everyone."

"We really hate to eat you, but our foreign aid check is late this month."

Wanted: A Middle Class

WHY HAS all the apparent progress in economic reform and privatization (over 50 per cent of the Russian economy is now in private hands) not yielded a strong basis for democratic politics? As democrat Yegor Gaidar recently told me in Moscow, reforms have broken up the old state-controlled economy, but for Russia to establish the basis for democracy "will require the emergence of an entrepreneurial middle class." That class, Gaidar said, has been strangled by high inflation and high taxation. And most privatization has simply transferred wealth into the hands of the old industrial *nomenklatura*, which seeks to "preserve its oligopoly . . . by limiting competition with the assistance of the state." Gaidar believes a middle class will emerge in the next few years. "If only the next elections were in 1997 or 1998, everything would be fine," he said, though he opposes a cancellation of the scheduled vote. "Unfortunately, we may have to pass through a rough patch."

For the moment, President Clinton and his advisors, most notably Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott, seem to accept Foreign Minister Kozyrev's argument that a U.S.–Russian confrontation on such issues as Iran and NATO will only weaken the hand of Russian moderates. But whatever can be said for Kozyrev's frankness and integrity, his thesis is wrong. Accommodation with Russia's aggressive foreign policy will only whet the appetite of the extremists. And it will do nothing to change the fact that Yeltsin, one year from the presidential election, is a political corpse.

As the election approaches, everyone in Moscow waits for the other shoe to drop. It may turn out to be a boot. Thus, while President Clinton's visit to Moscow has contributed to a sense of continuity in the bilateral relationship, the Administration should now change course, joining with the Republicans in supporting the rapid eastward expansion of NATO. It should also fashion a long-term strategy to help Ukraine evolve into a prosperous, democratic, and neutral state in Eastern Europe. President Clinton ought to have spent

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more time in Kiev. For Ukraine can become the pillar of a stable post-Soviet European order. But that will happen only if the U.S. leads its European allies in strengthening Kiev's sovereignty and helping Ukraine withstand Russia's likely turn to neo-imperialist militarism. □

Reining in Medicare Costs

PAY OR PAY

Managed care will not save Medicare, but a dose of reality might.

JOHN MERLINE

HOUSE Speaker Newt Gingrich confused a lot of people with his recent talk about separating Medicare reform from the budget process. After all, any credible balanced-budget plan will have to deal with the $170-billion Medicare program. Yet Gingrich is right about one thing: Medicare's looming fiscal crisis would have to be addressed even if the Republicans hadn't promised to balance the budget. The problem is that the idea they have seized upon to "transform" Medicare probably won't work.

Medicare's latest annual report paints a grim picture. Despite more than a decade of cost-control efforts, Medicare costs are expected to grow by more than 10 per cent annually during the next five years. Under current rules Medicare's Hospital Insurance program (Part A) will face a shortfall of $47 billion by 2002. When the baby-boomers start retiring, the deficit will top $100 billion; it will explode to $1.4 trillion by 2035. Part B, which covers physician services, is in even worse shape. Funded largely through the Treasury, with a small portion paid by the elderly in monthly premiums, Part B is expected to triple in cost over the next ten years.

Despite this explosive growth, Medicare continues to leave the elderly exposed to catastrophic medical expenses, and it has failed to control routine health costs for the elderly, who pay 50 per cent more for health care today as a share of income than they did before Medicare started. If history is any guide, cost control will prove very difficult. Since the early 1980s, Medicare has clamped down on fees paid to hospitals and doctors, stepped up efforts to control fraud, and increasingly meddled in doctors' practices, but to little avail.

The package of Medicare reforms that the Republicans are pushing may not do much better. The centerpiece of most GOP reform proposals offered to date is gradually replacing Medicare's antiquated fee-for-service payment system by encouraging the elderly to enroll in managed-care plans. The thinking is that managed care has worked wonders in the private sector, and that it could do the same for Medicare. Republicans assume that moving more of the elderly into managed care would cut costs without cutting benefits. Bill Thomas (R., Calif.), chairman of the House Ways and Means Health Subcommittee, recently lined up witnesses who advocated this approach.

Medicare is already headed in the direction of managed care, with some 2 million elderly in 26 states enrolled in health-maintenance organizations that have contracts with Medicare. But the results are not encouraging. For each Medicare patient it enrolls, an HMO gets a flat fee equal to 95 per cent of the average Medicare fee-for-service costs in the area. "By definition, every citizen who decides to take a Medicare HMO in that state is saving the taxpayer 5 per cent of the average cost of Medicare," Gingrich said in testimony before the Ways and Means Committee.

Mr. Merline is Washington correspondent for Investor's Business Daily.

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While the logic seems sound, a recent General Accounting Office study concluded that the HMOs actually end up costing the program *more* money. The GAO found the HMOs have, by design or accident, enrolled mostly the healthy elderly, whose health-care costs are less than 95 per cent of their states' average, with the HMOs pocketing the difference. As a result, the patients enrolled in Medicare HMOs cost taxpayers 6 to 28 per cent more than if they had stayed in the regular fee-for-service plan.

"Because [the HMO] payment is made per person, and not per service, HMOs have an incentive to . . . enroll only those patients who are expected to have relatively low health-care costs," the GAO report says. Anecdotal evidence suggests that HMOs have discouraged sicker patients from signing up or sticking with the plan. "Once patients become very ill, some HMOs encourage them to disenroll," says Marilyn Moon, a senior fellow at the Urban Institute.

And, the GAO says, since the HMOs have succeeded in skimming the best risks, the remaining fee-for-service pool is sicker. As a result, the average fee-for-service cost climbs—and, given the way the deal is structured, so does the 95 per cent fixed payment to the HMOs. "You can't just move people into managed care in a voluntary way and save money," says Miss Moon. "And I'm not sure we're prepared to push everybody into managed care."

Managed-care supporters say the problem is one of design. Set the payment rates properly, they say, and you start reaping big savings. But it is hard to see how HMOs could squeeze more savings out of the provision of care to the elderly than Medicare already has. University of Southern California economist and physician Dr. William Schwartz finds that cutting out wasteful or inefficient health-care spending can do little to reduce overall health costs. Various studies show that HMOs get most of their savings from negotiated discounts with providers, not from greater efficiency. But Medicare already pays providers below market rates, with payments to physicians currently set at only 68 per cent of average private-sector fees. As Bruce Vladeck, head of the Health Care Financing Administration (HCFA), puts it, Medicare "takes its discounts up front" by setting provider rates for doctors and hospitals. Beating Medicare on this score would severely hurt doctors' livelihoods and hospitals' bottom lines. Already, low reimbursement rates have led to complaints about rationing in the Medicare system. Hospitals, according to several studies, are releasing some Medicare patients earlier and in less

A Gift from Medicare

MY MOTHER died on February 22. She was 88. I think she would have welcomed death, but the intelligent, philosophical woman we knew was already gone; the last months of her life were a painful slide into physical helplessness and utter disorientation.

She wasn't afraid of death. And yet, along the way she made choices that led in a straight line to the thing she *had* feared most—not as bad as it might have been, but bad enough, robbing her of dignity and mind. A gift from Medicare.

Not that Medicare wasn't a boon. First she developed an aneurysm and had to have abdominal surgery—no question about it. She got through that and resumed what was still a fairly active life. But then the choices started to get more shadowy. She had angina, and when she was 80 she had a heart attack. The doctors said another one was likely, that it might well be fatal. They advised bypass surgery—she had "the body of a 70-year-old." Our family is comfortably middle class but far from rich, and there was no way we could have afforded the surgery and hospitalization, but of course that didn't matter. Medicare would pay the bills. No bypass surgery for her, she had always said. But she finally agreed.

And came to regret it. Recuperation was long and painful—it took two years. She thought the doctors had misled her about how difficult it would be. She should have said no, she felt bitterly, and taken her chances. And there were the other trials of advancing age. Cataract surgery—nothing major these days, and unquestionably warranted. But then she had strokes, cardiovascular insults that weren't really disabling but left their mark. After one of them, she had to learn to write all over again. Steadily worsening arthritis. Back to the hospital after a fall that cracked a vertebra. Another fall, much worse, that broke her hip. She was determined to walk after the operation and the long convalescence, and she did, but she had to give up the apartment she loved and move to a retirement residence. I have no idea how much all the doctors and hospitals cost, and I doubt that she did either—I think she just glanced at the notifications, paid the usually modest uncovered amounts, and filed the forms away.

And perhaps it was worth all the pain. The heart surgery finally gave her a couple of reasonably good years. My father had died young, thirty years ago, but she had an affectionate family, loved her grandchildren, lived to see their children. She played bridge. She organized a reading group (raising a few elderly Iowa eyebrows when she picked *The Bonfire of the Vanities* for the first discussion). But she made a final decision that was, in retrospect, an unambiguous mistake.

Last summer, when she was 87, she had another heart attack. She had always been adamant: no pacemaker. But the doctors told us that it might enable her to go back to her room at the residence. Without it, she might live on for months, but completely incapacitated. So my brother and I advised her to accept it, and she reluctantly went along. She said afterward that she felt pressured by the family, and perhaps she was, but in any case money was no object. Medicare was always there.

I don't know that the doctors deliberately misled us, but after the decision had been made it became clear that without the pacemaker she would have died within days or even hours. And it would have been better, for her own sake, if she had, because

Mr. Anderson is a former editor and producer for WNBC-TV in New York.

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stable condition than they formerly would. And elderly patients increasingly complain about having difficulty finding doctors willing to treat them.

PR or Results?

THE enthusiasm for the cost-cutting potential of managed care, critics charge, reflects aggressive industry PR more than market results. "The most advanced studies show that despite some employers' tendency to resort to HMOs to save money, managed care is not a panacea," says Greg Scandlen, executive director of the Council for Affordable Health Insurance, which represents small and medium-sized insurers.

A 1993 GAO report found that "little empirical evidence exists on the cost savings of managed care" for employers. Most studies showing a significant managed-care cost advantage fail to account adequately for key factors affecting health-insurance costs, such as the age and health status of enrollees. Because managed-care plans tend to attract younger, healthier workers, their cost savings may be exaggerated.

Whatever savings are available from managed care, they may be one-time events. A Congressional Budget Office study found that "the limited available evidence suggests that managed care does not affect the underlying rate of growth in costs." An employer survey by Foster Higgins appears to confirm this. It found overall premiums dropped by more than 1 per cent between 1993 and 1994, as many businesses shifted workers into managed-care plans. These plans have, on average, lower premiums than fee-for-service policies. But managed-care plan premiums continue to increase at rates comparable to those of fee-for-service premiums. HMO premiums increased 13 per cent between 1992 and 1994, with indemnity premiums climbing 18 per cent. Premiums for so-called point-of-service managed-care plans grew 20 per cent over those years. A survey by Hay/Huggins, a Philadelphia consulting firm, showed that average premiums for family coverage increased faster between 1992 and 1994 in HMOs than in traditional indemnity plans. Over all, according to a study in *Health Affairs*, real health-care prices climbed 4.3 per cent annually in the first three years of this decade, compared with 0.7 per cent in the 1970s, despite the steady growth in managed-care enrollment during that time. The study also found that the slowdown in spending in recent years has been "modest at best."

Managed care replicates in a private setting the basic economic flaw of Medicare (and the health-care industry in general): an overreliance on third-par-

---

she would have been spared the misery of her last few months. Confined now to a nursing home—a hospice, really—she got excellent care, but her condition, complicated by urinary infections and the pain of arthritis, rapidly deteriorated until, unable to walk or take care of personal needs, she sank into depression, developed paranoid delusions, and, probably because of continuing cardiovascular disturbances, gradually lost her mind.

IT HAD been a good mind. She liked to write, and once, after one of her trips to the hospital, she thought back in the form of a poem, "Thoughts in the Middle of the Night":

A woman in the bed next to me
Had an operation for cancer.
They poked tubes of all sorts
into all her delicate and
private interstices.
The gain in life was negligible,
the pain horrible.

One night she became desperate.
She sat up in bed and pulled out
every tube;
The nurses and doctors put them
all back in.

I am perfectly sane.
My blood is claret,
My blood pressure has the
acceptable peaks and valleys,
But when old age or disease
defeats me . . .

These decisions used to be made
by God.
If they are to be made by human
beings now
That human being is going to be
me.

So she wrote a living will, which made things easier for my brother and me when the last painful decisions had to be made. And at least it helped save her from a hellish twilight presided over by tubes and machines. Even when it was clear that she was dying, her life might have been prolonged for weeks if we had not said specifically that we didn't want her to go to the hospital for intensive care, didn't want feeding tubes, didn't want intravenous hydration. Just all the painkillers she could tolerate, and oxygen if it made her more comfortable. Nobody pressured us either way, but if we had been blindly unwilling to let her go, the doctors would have accommodated, and Medicare would have paid the bills.

For me, it wasn't the first such decision. Last summer, my uncle (81 and mentally incapacitated) developed an ulcer that caused massive hemorrhaging, and the doctors suggested that we might want to prolong his life—by removing his stomach. We didn't talk about what it would be like for him if he survived the surgery, because the answer was clearly no. He died a day later. I have no regrets, especially for him. But of course cost wasn't a consideration: the entire bill would have been paid by Medicare together with, since he was indigent, Medicaid and Title 19.

It may seem crass and jarring even to talk about costs. But of course we have to, sooner or later, whether we want to or not. There probably isn't enough money in the country to give everybody everything medicine can provide now, as life ebbs away with no hope of recovery. To me, though, as my mother was dying, my thoughts were hardly about economics or budget deficits. They were about pain, physical and psychological. Pointless pain. She told me once that pneumonia used to be called "the old man's friend." Of course that was in the days before the wonders of modern technology and the bounty of Medicare.

—LORRIN ANDERSON

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ty payments. Medicare shields patients from most of the direct costs of their own health-care decisions by cutting deductibles and co-payments to the vanishing point. Managed care's selling point to the elderly is that they will face even fewer out-of-pocket costs. As a result, patients have a strong incentive to overconsume. To prevent this, health-care services must be "managed" from the top down, with thousands of administrators enforcing layers upon layers of rules and regulations on patients and providers. "Managed-care organizations currently perform regulatory functions that governments do elsewhere and that Medicare does here," writes Dr. Robert Berenson in *Health Affairs*.

As with Medicare, aggressive cost-control efforts by managed-care companies have led to growing complaints of rationing. Over the last ten years, for example, the HCFA (a U.S. Government agency) has repeatedly found Florida HMOs violating Medicare quality guidelines by delaying or withholding treatment, failing to act on test results, and so on. A study of California HMOs by the Medicare Advocacy Project turned up similar complaints. In one case, a California HMO failed to schedule an eye operation for two years, by which time the elderly patient could no longer drive or read.

Patients with medical problems requiring specialized or costly treatment are increasingly concerned about private-sector cost-control efforts. "Rationing is quickly becoming a fact of life," warns the National Kidney Cancer Foundation. Replacing ham-fisted government rationing with more efficient private-sector rationing will prove cold comfort to the elderly.

Some Republican reformers argue that this problem can be addressed by giving vouchers to the elderly and letting them choose from a range of approved health plans. Competition among plans would ensure both low cost and high quality. The program, advocates say, would resemble the Federal Employee Health Benefits Plan. The Heritage Foundation's Robert Moffit calls the FEHBP "an excellent showcase" for reform.

Not everyone is convinced. "Almost anyone familiar with the health-benefits program for federal employees knows that it is in desperate need of reform," writes John Goodman, president of the National Center for Policy Analysis (NCPA). Measured on a per-enrollee basis, he says, the FEHBP's costs rose 25 per cent faster than premiums in the private sector during the 1980s. Even supporters admit that the FEHBP has barely outperformed Medicare on costs, with average annual increases coming in only 1 percentage point lower between 1976 and 1992. Between 1985 and 1992, the FEHBP's per-capita costs rose nearly twice as fast as Medicare's. The problem, Moffit says, is that FEHBP administrators have a "mindless opposition to high-deductible plans." Let high-deductible plans in and overall costs would drop, he says.

Hence, the NCPA's proposal to allow the elderly to take their share of Medicare funds and use them to buy a high-deductible plan that covers catastrophic expenses, putting the remaining money in a Medical Savings Account. This would expose the elderly more directly to the cost of their care while at the same time protecting them from financial ruin in the case of an emergency. Any money not spent on health care could be saved in the MSA, giving the elderly a powerful incentive to manage their own care. Supporters of MSAs note that companies experimenting with them have been successful at cutting costs.

"The cost-control incentives of MSAs would substantially reduce Medicare expenses over time," the NCPA's Peter Ferrara testified recently. "Over time, Medicare would be reformed into a more rational program protecting the elderly against high medical expenses, but not attempting to pay for all routine expenses. Moreover, through this option, the elderly could escape the rationing and reduced quality of care that is increasingly being imposed on them under Medicare." The important and difficult task is to convince the elderly that there's no such thing as free health care. □

Till Death Do Them Part?

VOW FOR NOW

No-fault divorce has abolished marriage, but what legislators have put asunder, they can restore.

ROBERT L. PLUNKETT

MUCH has been written in the last twenty years about the state of marriage. These commentaries tend to fall into two opposite camps: those which advocate or celebrate the redefinition of matrimony and those which deplore its decline. Two decades ago, the former clearly predominated; the latter are more common today. To my knowledge, however, none of the commentators has stumbled upon the fact that marriage was abolished in the United States in the 1970s. That status which we call "being married" today is nothing of the kind; it is to real marriage what the Holy Roman Empire was to the real Roman Empire, something that borrows the name of a dead institution to give itself legitimacy.

According to *Black's Law Dictionary* (1968), in marriage "a man and woman . . . mutually engage with each other to live their whole lives together in the state of union which ought to exist between a husband and wife." That quotation summarizes definitions set forth by precedents and authorities going as far back as such things are preserved. In simple terms, the essentials of a marriage are: 1) a man and woman 2) in a state of union 3) for life. There are variations from time to time and from society to society. In polygamous cultures, for instance, one man can have

Mr. Plunkett, a practicing attorney, is vice dean of the Southern California Institute of Law and an adjunct professor of the University of LaVerne School of Law. He is happily married (as that term is currently understood) to his original wife.

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many marriages, but each is a one-man-and-one-woman contract.

The "for life" part of the definition has been more or less elastic since at least Roman times. But the promise to be married "until death do you part" was, until the establishment of no-fault divorce, binding on at least one of the parties as long as the other remained blameless. Where women were chattel, the wedding vow was breakable by the husband but unbreakable by the wife. Where a tribeswoman could turn out her husband at will, the husband was bound to stay with the wife until she either threw him out or did something wrong that would justify his leaving.

It was established long ago by the courts that alleged marriage vows which did not contemplate a lifetime union did not create a marriage. Saying "I promise to be your wife for five years" did not make someone a wife for even one second. With even stronger logic, a vow to be husband and wife "as long as we want" was no marriage vow. A purported marriage ceremony established a marriage if and only if at least one of the participants believed that they were making a commitment to which they would be held for life.

What is this thing we currently call "marriage"? Most wedding ceremonies still contain the requisite language about "forsaking all others," remaining together "for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, until death do you part." But these words have no basis in reality. Under current law the bride and groom are in fact promising to be husband and wife only until one of them doesn't want to any more. The lifetime commitment which defined marriage is gone.

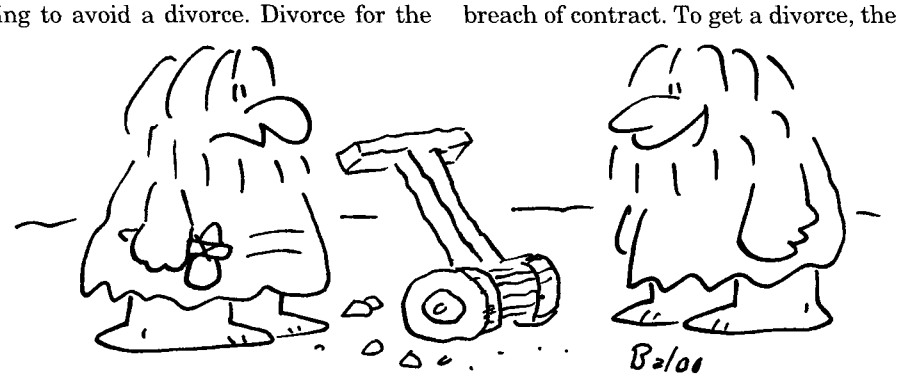
"You can't stop somebody from getting a divorce if they really want one." That is the first thing an ethical lawyer today tells someone who is trying to avoid a divorce. Divorce for the asking is the rule. Even if a state required more, that could easily be gotten around by establishing a brief residence in a state that wasn't so picky.

In 1969, when California Governor Ronald Reagan signed the nation's first no-fault divorce law, he and the legislature talked as if they were merely reforming the existing system by establishing a single humane standard for the dissolution of marriage. Supposedly, they were simply making it easier for those trapped in hopeless unions to fix their lives by getting out. It was hailed as a progressive reform and quickly imitated by almost every other state. It was a noncontroversial act, buried in the news by the Vietnam War and other concerns. Yet signing the no-fault divorce law may have been the most important thing Reagan did in his entire political career. To understand why, we need to review the history of divorce.

Anglo-American jurisprudence once considered marriage a sacrament, or at least an unbreakable vow. While a marriage might be annulled in circumstances which struck at its validity, such as concealed impotence, a marriage, once valid, was set in stone. This was true even if both spouses desperately wanted a divorce, because in making their marriage vows they were deemed to have made a covenant not only with each other but also with God and society. As late as 1900, fewer than one thousand divorces a year were granted in all of Britain.

The iron rule against divorce softened with the adoption of the principle that a person who was grievously wronged by his or her spouse should get relief from the courts and that this relief could include the right to get out of the marriage. When people "sued for divorce," they actually were filing a suit against the other spouse, just as if they were suing for personal injury or breach of contract. To get a divorce, the petitioner had to show that the respondent was guilty. If guilt was found, there would usually be not only a divorce but damages in the form of alimony and loss of property.

The grounds for divorce, primarily adultery and desertion, were originally narrow and directly related to the marriage contract. Furthermore, divorce was granted only when an innocent party sued a guilty one. If, for instance, the wife and the husband each proved that the other had committed adultery, the couple had to stay married, because the guilt of one spouse canceled out the guilt of the other. If you watch old movies, you might hear a character say, "My wife won't give me a divorce." This meant that the wife wouldn't go along with his seeking a divorce and that she refused to seek one herself based on whatever grounds she had. Under the fault divorce system, the innocent spouse had an absolute right to keep the marriage together.



"What a neat invention—Can I borrow it?"

I'm OK, You're OK

THE idea of divorce as a lawsuit by a good spouse against a bad one eroded over the decades as a result of misuse and the "reform" it encouraged. There were two major types of misuse. First, one party let the other trump up a phony adultery or desertion purely to meet the letter of the law. Second, courts stretched the letter of the law to absurd lengths to accommodate the parties—for example, by ruling that trivial incidents qualified as "extreme mental cruelty." But this worked only if the husband and wife were in cahoots.

The misuse of existing divorce law involved blatant hypocrisy and frequent perjury, but it did not strike at the essence of marriage as a lifetime commitment. So-called reform of the divorce laws, inspired largely by distaste for collusive divorce, did far more damage. By creating new grounds such as "incompatibility," legislators sought to get away from the idea that you could end a marriage only if one spouse was bad and the other good. These attempts to graft a nonfault ground onto the traditional system of suing for divorce led to some odd legal decisions. Then came the idea of no-fault divorce.

By 1970, among the intelligentsia, the idea that marriage was a sacred commitment was as dead as Queen Victoria, and the idea that marriages

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should be preserved for some reason independent of the happiness of the couple was comatose. The belief that people should not be forced to stay in bad marriages was firmly established among our policy- and opinion-makers. No-fault divorce fit this new dogma perfectly. Instead of inquiring into whether the husband or wife was bad, the courts would inquire into whether the marriage was bad. Instead of suing for divorce, one would petition to dissolve the marriage. Issues of fault and blame would be eliminated.

Had the first no-fault divorce law been presented as one that would allow either spouse to dissolve the marriage at his or her whim, it almost certainly would have been defeated. It appears that everybody whose opinion counted believed that its sole effect would be to make it easier to end hopeless marriages. After all, the law's main innovation was to allow the dissolution of marriages afflicted with "irreconcilable differences which have led to the irremediable breakdown of the marriage." Few, given the dominant ideology of the time, could oppose divorce in that situation.

The people who believed that the law would be applied to end only truly hopeless marriages were incredibly naïve. The courts were ill equipped and ill disposed to inquire into whether differences were "irreconcilable" or whether a marriage had suffered an "irremediable" breakdown. In fact, the mere filing of a petition for dissolution of marriage was deemed sufficient. The inquiry into whether the grounds for dissolution existed was in practice limited to the petitioning party's reciting of the statutory language verbatim or checking a box on a form, which did the same thing. It was divorce for the asking, pure and simple.

This was the abolition of marriage. Whatever words were used in the ceremony, weddings ceased to be occasions where a man and woman mutually engaged to live their whole lives together as husband and wife. They became occasions where a man and woman agreed to call themselves husband and wife until one of them decided otherwise. In the late Sixties, some intellectuals advocated "trial marriages," in which people would try each other out before committing to real marriage. This talk faded as it sank in that *every* marriage was now a trial marriage.

The wedding vow had devolved from being the most serious and solemn oath a typical person ever made into being less than a contract. An oral contract made with a 2-year-old is more binding than the contract of marriage; it at least binds one party, the adult. A marriage contract is binding on no one. If Kim Basinger says "OK" when asked by a producer if she will star in a movie and then backs out, she has made herself liable for millions of dollars in damages. If she solemnly swears in church to love, honor, and, forsaking all others, keep only unto that producer till death them do part, she is free to break that promise at any time without penalty.

Many people who have gone through

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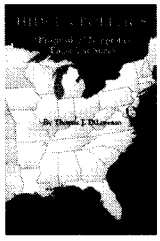

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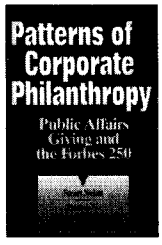

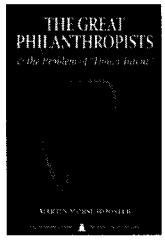

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divorce or seen others do so will object to the phrase "without penalty." They know the dissolution of marriage carries with it great potential expense and financial loss. There's the division of property, child support, and possibly even spousal support.

Those may seem like penalties, but they are not. For one thing, they represent nothing more than the state's effort to dissolve the marital partnership equitably. A divorcing man may lose his house, but it is not as a penalty; it is because the house was only half his all along. Child support is only the discharge of the continuing obligation of supporting one's child, an obligation that would have existed even if there had never been a marriage. Spousal support is a safety net for a spouse who was out of the labor force.

The Just and the Unjust Fella

MORE TO the point, these things are not penalties because they fall equally hard on the guilty and the innocent. The spouse who broke the promise to live together as husband and wife is on an equal legal footing with the spouse who followed it faithfully. The fact that one spouse broke his or her marriage vows has no bearing on his or her rights to property, support, etc. No-fault means no distinction between the victim and the wrongdoer.

Couples go into marriage today figuring that if they don't like it they can always get a divorce. Though some still talk as if they are definitely in it for life, it is disturbing how many say things *at their weddings* like, "We'll see how long it lasts." People who talk as if their marriages are for life usually are greeted with comments like, "You might be one of the lucky ones," spoken in tones ranging from openly skeptical to patronizing.

Almost at the same time that the wedding vow was stripped of its essential meaning, the whole idea of marriage as a special estate was also being undermined from several other directions. "Palimony," the right of a nonmarital partner to seek marriage-like financial rights based on an express or implied contract, blurred the distinction between marriage and what was once called "living in sin." Another blow against marriage was the repeal of virtually all laws against adultery, cohabitation, and fornication, as well as all laws making a distinction between legitimate and illegitimate parenthood. This development was accompanied by the elimination of the stigma connected with all of these. These changes destroyed all real distinction between having sex or children in wedlock and having them extramaritally.

The idea that divorce should carry a stigma is moribund. In fact, divorce is more often applauded than deplored. When one of the two most popular advice columnists in the country ended her marriage after decades of telling others to stick it out, rather than outcry about her hypocrisy, there was much commentary about how this showed her "growth." The existence of commercial divorce congratulation cards shows how something which was once a subject of shame has become a cause for celebration for many.

About all that is left separating the wed from the unwed is the illusion that marriage still exists in a meaningful way and a dwindling list of benefits that are still reserved for married couples, such as family health-care insurance and joint tax filing. Even these are under attack, not by people who want to take them away from married couples but by people who want them to apply to nonmarital partners. These proposals have so much support because so-called marriage has deteriorated into a removable label, a ticket to certain perks.

Between the time that the belief that marriage was sacred fell out of fashion and the time that the thinking behind no-fault divorce took hold, the chief argument for keeping unhappy marriages intact was for the sake of the children. The term "broken home" was applied to a family that was missing a parent because of divorce; it was a sad word used for a situation that was universally deemed to be unfortunate.

"And I feel it's safe to tell you, now that the election is over, that everything my opponent said about me is true."

Around the time that no-fault divorce was created, the term "broken home" fell out of use and was replaced by a plethora of happy euphemisms. In place of the old ideas about the importance of intact families were new ones about how a stable, traditional family structure was either unimportant or actually harmful to kids. The notions which supported the dogma that children could thrive in what had once been called broken homes ranged from the plausible but wrong, like the idea that stepparents could fully replace birth parents, to the plainly idiotic, such as the claim that children were better off when released from an unhappy marriage. The latter ignored the fact that unhappy marriages are unhappy for the parents, and the happiness of the parents is rightly less important to children than having both of their parents around.

After a generation of experimentation with single-parent families and all manner of stepdads, moms' boyfriends, and such, the results are in. Children from single-parent families are more than five times as likely to live in poverty, nearly twice as likely to need psychological help, and two and a half times as likely to drop out of school, get pregnant before marriage, abuse drugs, and commit crimes as are children from intact families.

Half of all marriages end in divorce. Four years after the adoption of the first no-fault divorce law, divorce passed death as the leading cause of family breakup. Every year more than a million children go through divorce and separation.

People who deplore the effects of single-parent upbringing focus on the booming rate of illegitimacy, all but ignoring the other half of the problem, the catastrophic divorce rate. In fact, the silence on the latter issue seems largely based on an unspoken assumption that divorce is like a force of nature, beyond human control.

Similarly, commentators who wax eloquent about the ill effects of unwed motherhood on teenaged mothers seem unaware of the ill effects of divorce on adults, especially women. The leading

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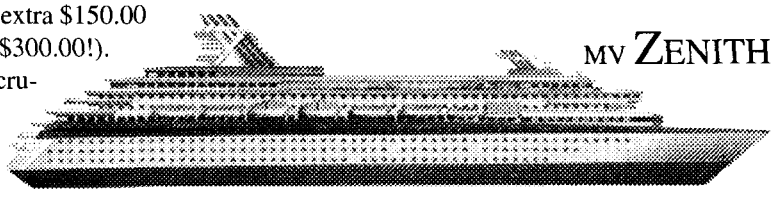

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article on single-parent families, "Dan Quayle Was Right," by Barbara Dafoe Whitehead (*The Atlantic*, April 1993), treated divorce as a good thing for the parents even while making a convincing case for its ill effects on children. But the abolition of marriage has been a disaster for people of all ages.

Prisoner's Dilemma

PEOPLE earnestly want commitment from their beloved, but it is no longer possible to have final commitment to or from anybody. You can devote your life to someone else, but the law and society give you no security against the other person's leaving and making all your effort pointless. People are rational; when they know this they will, for their own protection, hold back on giving love and making sacrifices. Knowing that they can be thrown away at any time and that divorce has become the rule rather than the exception has transformed married couples from partners in life's journey into players in a game of prisoner's dilemma.

When divorce was available only to a wronged party, a wife could see her husband through his hard times knowing that she could hold onto him through hers. A woman at the peak of her attractiveness could work full time while her husband went through medical school, knowing that he could not easily leave her when he was rich and she middle-aged. Now, he can take her at her best and leave her whenever a better offer comes along. So we have legions of discarded older ex-wives of now successful men.

There is nothing inevitable or immutable about the abolition of marriage. The divorce rate can be brought under control by mere mortals. Make it harder to leave a marriage, and more people will decide they can make a go of it after all.

Marriages should be dissolvable only by mutual agreement or on grounds, such as adultery, desertion, and criminal physical abuse, that clearly involve a wrong by one party against the other and that by their very nature constitute a violation of the marriage vows as they are traditionally understood. A husband or wife who faithfully performs his or her duties in the marriage should have the absolute right to insist that the marriage remain intact. The addition of "mutual agreement" to the traditional grounds for divorce eliminates the need for fraudulent, collusive divorces by preserving the right of couples to end a marriage in which they both feel trapped.

To properly re-establish marriage, we should also abolish the Reno-style quickie divorce. Even before no-fault, the divorce laws were made a mockery, at least for the rich, by the ease with which one could shop around for a favorable divorce jurisdiction. When divorces were hard to get in most states, everyone knew they could be obtained easily in Nevada and a few other places. This meant that the restrictive laws of 49 states could be undone by one. Federal legislation should require that the law of the state where the wedding ceremony took place be controlling on the issue of whether any particular marriage could be dissolved.

Much of the social pathology, moral breakdown, alienation, and rootlessness that afflict our society today can be traced to the abolition of marriage. These will remain with us until their cause is effectively dealt with. Of course, the first step toward re-establishing marriage as an institution is to recognize that it was disestablished in the first place. The next step is to change the laws that abolished it. □

Mud Path (Cont'd)

In response to George Tobin's analysis of the ethics charges against House Speaker Newt Gingrich ("Mud Path," *NR*, April 3), we received a letter from Steven J. Jost, a Democratic political consultant who worked on Ben Jones's 1994 campaign against Newt Gingrich and assisted with the ethics complaint filed by Mr. Jones. Mr. Jost's main points follow, interspersed with Mr. Tobin's replies (in italics).

1. Mr. Tobin implies that Dean Timothy Mescon of Kennesaw State College heard Gingrich speak in March 1993 and innocently approached the congressman afterward with the first suggestion that he teach the "Renewing American Civilization" course at the dean's campus. This is pure baloney. According to documents from the college, Gingrich and Mescon had known each other since November 1991 and had been exchanging letters about Gingrich's efforts to help Mescon's consulting business get government contracts . . .

Mr. Jost alleges that, because Gingrich and Mescon had met prior to March 1993, the decision to create the "Renewing American Civilization" course was made prior to March 1993. Based on Gingrich's speeches and my discussions with his associates, it is certain that there was no plan before February 1993 to create such a course. Both Mescon and Gingrich say that the March date is the starting point, and I have seen no evidence to contradict their account. However, even if it turns out that Mescon and Gingrich discussed such a course in general terms weeks or even months earlier, so what? There would be no impropriety in such a conversation.

2. Mr. Tobin says Gingrich first asked Jeffrey Eisenach, executive director of GOPAC, to work on the course in May 1993. Check the documents. Eisenach was directing the course from GOPAC's offices as of February. A Gingrich memo dated March 1, 1993, instructs Eisenach to work up a budget for the course and identifies him as one of four co-authors of the textbook. It is vital to Gingrich's defense to create the impression that GOPAC did not direct the project, but GOPAC's own documents prove its staff conceived and managed the project for months before Gingrich notified the ethics committee.

Mr. Jost alleges that Jeff Eisenach advised Gingrich with respect to the course before May 1993. Eisenach, along with dozens of other policy experts, members of Congress, and scholars, had been consulted by Gingrich about the ideas that are the basis of the course and later about the form and content of the course. It was in May 1993 that Eisenach was asked to take over as project director, as I stated in the article. Mr. Jost's breathless discovery of earlier contacts between Gingrich

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and his friend Jeff Eisenach again falls into the category of "So what?"

3. Gingrich wrote to the ethics committee on July 21, 1993, and pledged that his staff members "would not be asked to perform any specific tasks." Kennesaw documents demonstrate that Gingrich staffers were "tasked" by Gingrich to work on the project four months earlier. Gingrich recently admitted he had reprimanded staff on four occasions for improperly using official resources when they attempted to lobby Kennesaw officials against the impending decision to cancel the class. In March, the *Los Angeles Times* reported that two Gingrich aides admitted congressional staff "participated in everything from strategy meetings to clerical errands." . . .

The staff involvement cited by Mr. Jost, particularly that of Tony Blankley, does not appear to be related to course development. The dates of the alleged involvement are after the organized political and media attacks on Gingrich and the course had begun. It is a strange standard of ethics which holds that Democrats may use staff time and resources to orchestrate a political attack on Gingrich but that Gingrich and his press aides are not permitted to use staff time to respond. I have yet to see evidence that the Gingrich staff was involved in preparing or teaching the course rather than handling the normal staff duties of dealing with media and political attacks on their boss.

Mr. Gingrich's response to the ethics committee last October included an extensive refutation of the charge of staff misuse. It's worth noting that the most recent charges had to do with the staff time spent implementing the office rules to prevent contacts with the course. Apparently, implementing office rules (as established by the committee) was itself an ethical violation!

4. Mr. Tobin reports that on August 31, 1993, Representative Fred Grandy wrote to Gingrich and gave him permission to teach the course. . . . Signed by Grandy and Jim McDermott, chairman of the ethics committee, [the] letter granted Gingrich permission on behalf of the committee to raise tax-exempt funds for the course so long as "no official resources, including staff time, are used in connection with the teaching," and on the assurance that Gingrich was in compliance with all other House rules. Thanks to Gingrich's own staff, we know that they were quite extensively involved. The Grandy/McDermott letter, quoted at length elsewhere by Mr. Tobin, was equally precise in the prohibition against staff time. Gingrich just ignored it . . .

Serge F. Kovaleski's Washington Post *article stating that Gingrich flouted a clear warning from the ethics committee was grossly misleading. In fact, the committee replied that Gingrich's proposal was OK precisely because the proposal fit within the pertinent rules as summarized by Grandy.*

5. Mr. Tobin says "the facts don't confirm" the charge that Gingrich cited corporations in his course as a form of advertising for his sponsors. Final Kennesaw accounting records show the total cost of the course was $390,676, not $660,000, as Mr. Tobin reported without substantiation. Nearly a third of funding, $102,000, is the result of Gingrich's promising promotional material in his lectures to donors. A May

(Continues on page 68)

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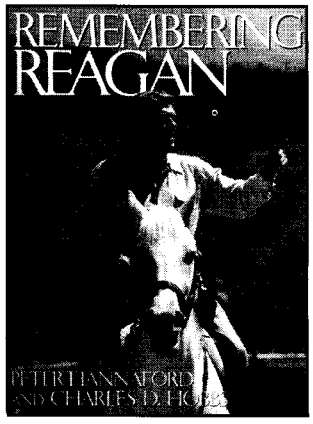

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THE VICE PRESIDENT
WASHINGTON

May 7, 1995

Dear Rusty,

Sorry it's taken me so long to respond to your last letter. I've been swamped with work, but you know how much I admire your dedication and selflessness in spending so much time out of touch with the rest of the world, and so you can imagine the guilt I feel about taking so long to answer your questions.

What's new up here, you ask?

Plenty.

To answer your first question, Johnnie Cochran hasn't yet been able to discredit Mark Fuhrman, but, as you predicted in your next to last note, criminalist Fung was in for some rough cross-ex action. Another juror was excused, but both Marcia and Johnnie think they'll be able to get a verdict. Shapiro is taking a back seat on most of this, but it turns out that you were absolutely right when you wrote that "Lance Ito doesn't have the stuff."

Here's hoping you get your dish fixed soon!

In other news:

Newt Gingrich and Rush Limbaugh pretty much instigated the worst terrorist action on American soil in history. Their attacks on the government have sadly sunk in with a large number of Americans. I told Bill that we should charge them under the Sedition Acts, which, I later learned, are "legally dormant"; and anyway, as Tipper mentioned at a White House dinner, it's not like either Gingrich or Limbaugh visited Moscow during the Vietnam War and led anti-American protests.

Barbra Streisand is about to be named DNC chair, something I've supported for months. Besides being a very talented actress/singer/director/producer, she's a very sophisticated political thinker. She recently gave a speech at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government, in which she talked about how being a liberal—which comes from the Latin "liber," meaning "free"—is actually a very noble and honorable distinction. She thinks, shrewdly, that we liberals (and by that I mean you liberals, as I have always considered myself a moderate Southern neo-conservative middle-of-the-road environmentalist pro-choice everyday kind of guy who loathes labels) shouldn't shy away from saying, "Hey! I'm a liberal and I'm proud!" (which I would if I was but I'm not) and reclaim our (your) legacy. There may not be a "free" lunch, but there damn well should be a "liberal" lunch.

The dollar has collapsed against the yen, to something around seventy yen to the dollar, which, although it's not—repeat, NOT—a trade policy bargaining chip, has turned out to be a very effective one. The Japanese are highly agitated about the whole mess, and in meeting after meeting, Bob Rubin has insisted that we remain absolutely indifferent to the dollar's slide, which hasn't been easy, since Ron Brown is apparently "highly exposed" on some short yen contracts, and has about two weeks to make his margin call. Technically, of course, it's illegal for Ron to even know about the various ins and outs of his finances. When I mentioned this to Ron, he explained very carefully and slowly that it wasn't his money, really. It was money held in something called an "offshore flexi-trust" that he maintained for the convenience of his "international employers." When I mentioned to him that as Secretary of Commerce, he was only legally allowed to have one employer, and a strictly "national" one at that, he asked me how I would like it if he told me how to do my job.

Steven Spielberg, Jeffrey Katzenberg, and David Geffen gave a terrific fundraising dinner for the Democrats a few weeks ago. Boy, do those guys know how to raise money! They've raised about $1 billion for their own company, and at $50,000 a plate, they raised a bundle for us, too. All three of them, by the way, are very concerned about Newt Gingrich's proposed welfare cuts, and they're prepared to do what it takes to beat the party of the rich in '96.

I hope you'll at least consider taking some time off from your research in Brazil to travel with me in the campaign. Tipper, just between us, is kind of a downer these days. She's taken to wearing Habitat for Humanity T-shirts everywhere, and she keeps mumbling about my "wilderness years, 1996-2004," when I "taught" a "Government and the Environment" course at the University of Tennessee. Clearly, she needs a pep talk.

Meanwhile, I've been sitting in my office brainstorming ideas for the '96 campaign. Tipper thinks I'm crazy—"Why the rush to read your obituary?" she says, pessimistically—but I know that a winning attitude is all that's needed. How about these slogans: "CLINTON-GORE: RELEVANT IN '96" or "CLINTON-GORE: BOB DOLE IS TOO MEAN" (that one needs work, I know), or my favorite: "CLINTON-GORE '96: OUR INCURSION IN HAITI WAS A LIMITED SUCCESS!" What do you think?

Your pal, Al

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Wrong, Terribly Wrong

PETER W. RODMAN

ROBERT McNamara must be wondering why he bothered. Twenty-seven years after leaving office as Lyndon Johnson's secretary of defense, he has broken his silence with a soul-baring *mea culpa* on the Vietnam War, of which he was a principal architect. Instead of public admiration for his candor, he has received a torrent of abuse. Angry Vietnam veterans revile him for the incompetent military strategy; antiwar zealots denounce him for not recanting and speaking out earlier. "Evil" and a "scoundrel," writes the distinguished military commentator (and Vietnam vet) Colonel Harry Summers; "lasting moral condemnation" is what the *New York Times* calls down upon him.

McNamara's Vietnam memoir is indeed a destructive exercise, but not for the reasons you have been reading in most reviews. McNamara was squeezed out of the Johnson Administration because he was already deeply disillusioned with the war. And in carrying his burden of guilt all these years, he has moved so far to the left that he confesses to more sins than either he or his country is guilty of.

In Retrospect: The Tragedy and Lessons of Vietnam, by Robert McNamara (Times, 414 pp., $27.50)

The book is written in a way that brings joy especially to the hearts of the antiwar crowd even while they denounce him, since its confessions seem to vindicate their opposition to the war. That was Bill Clinton's smug reaction. Yet the book is incredibly shallow in its political analysis—demonstrating how far in over his head McNamara was in that job from the beginning. Indeed, it's high time that someone questioned our country's habit of picking big-time industrialists for defense secretary on the theory that it's just a big management job. Sometimes the job requires a lot more than management skills: strategic wisdom and judgment, which McNamara clearly never had.

Mr. Rodman, an NR *senior editor, is director of National Security Programs at the Nixon Center for Peace and Freedom. He was on Henry Kissinger's Vietnam negotiating delegation during the Nixon Administration.*

In fairness to McNamara, his long silence had an honorable motive. Given

the national trauma that Vietnam brought, he feared that any apologia would be self-serving and unseemly. This reticence distinguished McNamara from egregious former colleagues such as Clark Clifford, Averell Harriman, and Cyrus Vance, who within months of leaving office were bombarding the Nixon Administration with peace proposals and demands for concessions to the North Vietnamese.

In the case of McNamara—whose revulsion against the Vietnam War probably came the earliest and was the most deeply felt of any of that crew's—public restraint was part of his penance. He kept in touch with Henry Kissinger, who was then Nixon's national security advisor, and poured out his doubts. Kissinger did not follow McNamara's dovish advice, but he respected the man's dignity in not joining in the public harassment of those who had inherited the mess he had helped create.

McNamara spent 1968 through 1981 as president of the World Bank, in what was even more clearly an act of atonement. He thought he could lift up the world's poor. Alas, we now know what a botch he made of that, too: a confidential internal postmortem on the World Bank's 15-year program in Tanzania, for example, criticized the Bank's leadership severely for being taken in—to the tune of some $16 billion in loans—by Julius Nyerere's absurd socialist policies which wrecked the country's agriculture, depressed its exports, and made it dependent on foreign donors for half of its budget. Whether we shall ever see a similar McNamara *mea culpa* for all this ("we were wrong, terribly wrong") remains to be seen. But I leave that subject to Brother Kudlow.

This memoir focuses almost entirely on Vietnam, leaving out the major impact that Robert McNamara had on such things as U.S. nuclear doctrine, NATO strategy, civilian–military relations, and Pentagon management and procurement. His famous pronouncement in April 1965 that the Soviets had given up the strategic arms race is also not mentioned. Fair enough. His aim here is to explain how Vietnam happened and to draw lessons. He traces the fateful decisions made during the Administrations in which he served, from the commitment of 16,000 military advisors in November 1961, through the coup against Ngo Dinh Diem in November 1963 and the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution in August 1964, to the bombing campaign over North Vietnam and massive ground-troop involvement in South Vietnam beginning in the spring of 1965. His account accords with the commonly held view of a series of whopping miscalculations, both political and military.

McNamara is surely right that we grossly underestimated the tenacity of the North Vietnamese and never came up with a plausible military strategy to defeat them. It was a war of attrition for us, not them. He also adds an important piece to the historical record by knocking down the revisionist asser-

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tion that the Gulf of Tonkin incidents—the two purported attacks by North Vietnamese gunboats on U.S. ships in August 1964—never happened. McNamara remains convinced that the first attack definitely did happen and the second one probably did. Whatever we may eventually discover if Hanoi's archives open up, this seems definitive proof of, at the very least, the sincere subjective conviction on the part of the top U.S. leadership that the attacks were genuine. McNamara's credibility on this point would seem to be total, given the self-abasement of the rest of the book.

Much of the rest of the book, unfortunately, is less credible. He speculates, for example, that John Kennedy would have withdrawn us from Vietnam if he had lived; as even Max Frankel of the *New York Times* retorts, there isn't the slightest evidence for this. He jumps to sweeping conclusions about the error of the domino theory. In truth, the fears of a Khrushchevite or Maoist plan to drive us out of Asia may have been overblown. On the other hand, McNamara is too quick to dismiss the view, widely held today, that our stand in Vietnam may have bought time for Southeast Asia to strengthen itself, including enabling our strategic ally Indonesia to fend off a Communist takeover attempt. As for the failure of the dominoes to fall after 1975, this has a lot to do with the (by then friendly) Chinese stepping in to fill the vacuum against the Soviets—which was more geopolitical luck than a refutation of earlier strategic fears. Documents newly liberated from Soviet archives do not tend to vindicate the more benign interpretations of Soviet motives and designs.

There is also, last but not least, the moral issue. After the massacres of two million Cambodians, the flight of tens of thousands of boat people from Vietnam, and the Pathet Lao campaign to exterminate the Hmong tribesmen by chemical warfare—all after we left—it is not so hard to defend the moral worthiness of having tried to prevent the Communist takeover. Our shame was not that we tried, but that we failed. The lesson to draw is not that we should never try, but that if we commit ourselves, we had better know what we are doing and we had better prevail. That surely is a "lesson" of Vietnam more worthy of those who sacrificed in that cause.

The end of McNamara's book touches briefly on non-Vietnam matters—especially the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis and the Harvard conferences he has recently attended, which brought together Soviet, American, and Cuban veterans of that crisis. The mischievousness of such conferences is demonstrated by the breast-beating conclusion of McNamara and some other Americans that it was all our fault: Khrushchev put missiles in Cuba because he feared we were planning another Bay of Pigs. (Even Khrushchev in his memoirs admitted that a big part of his motive was simply to redress the strategic balance.) Anguish about that brush with nuclear disaster has led to another of McNamara's recantations—his energetic anti-nuclear activism, advancing proposals for disarmament and no-first-use of nuclear weapons. He has championed this cause with the same self-righteous dogmatism with which he once sold us the body counts and whiz-kid strategizing in Vietnam, and with which he now trumpets his confessions of our Vietnam errors. He may never get it right. □

Cry, the Unbeloved Country

J. B. KELLY

IT IS tempting sometimes, when contemplating the war in Bosnia, to agree with Bismarck's cynical conclusion that the whole of the Balkans is not worth the bones of a single Pomeranian grenadier. But then one recalls that a great many Pomeranian and other German soldiers laid down their lives in the general European war that followed the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand at Sarajevo in June 1914. How much the recollection of that summer long ago may count in the calculations of the chancelleries in Berlin, Paris, and London today we do not know with any certainty. Whether it justifies the current flaccid behavior of the Western powers is another matter, though again, I suppose, one has to pause and ponder the possible reactions of Moscow to any determined Western intervention, especially in the light of Russia's savage repression of the Chechen uprising.

Bosnia: A Short History, by Noel Malcolm (New York University, 340 pp., $26.95)

Slaughterhouse: Bosnia and the Failure of the West, by David Rieff (Simon & Schuster, 240 pp., $22)

Noel Malcolm's short history of Bosnia is a positive gem, the product of profound scholarship, deep reflection, and a decency of sentiment that contrasts starkly with the palsied conduct of Western governments today. He begins his history in Roman times with the conquest of Illyria, the western Balkans, in the second and first centuries B.C. In the next few centuries Slavs and Croats migrated from the east (the Don basin and the northern Caucasus), establishing the kingdoms of "White Croatia" in Poland and "White Serbia" in Czechoslovakia before descending into the Balkans, where from the seventh century onward they came under the rule of Byzantium. The Ottoman conquest began in the second half of the fourteenth century, and by the late fifteenth century most of Bosnia was under Ottoman rule. It remained so until the Congress of Berlin in 1878, when it was placed under Austro-Hungarian administration. Thirty years later it was annexed outright by Austria–Hungary at the time of the Young Turk revolution in Istanbul. Finally—or nearly finally—Bosnia was incorporated in the new kingdom of Yugoslavia created in the aftermath of the First World War.

The practice of Islam by the Bosnian Muslims over the past century or so, it would seem, has been fairly haphazard or off-hand; probably no more so, however, from what Mr. Malcolm has to say, than the observance of Catholic or Orthodox Christianity by the two main

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groups, Croats and Serbs, who make up the other half of Bosnia's population. Whether these attitudes have changed under the impact of war it is difficult to determine, which is why, perhaps, Mr. Malcolm has little to say about the presence of foreign Muslim volunteers in Bosnia, or the financial aid supplied openly or surreptitiously by Muslim governments. It is an aspect of the conflict that should worry Western governments, for selfish reasons if not out of any higher motive. For the West's failure to end the killings and destruction in Bosnia is bound to provoke consequences as yet unidentifiable but which could prove highly dangerous.

Tito's *épuration* in 1945–46 of the Yugoslavs he considered a threat to him took the lives, Mr. Malcolm reminds us, of 250,000 people. The current Serbian campaign, whether mounted by the Bosnian Serbs led by Radovan Karadzic and General Ratko Mladic, or by the Serbians proper of President Slobodan Milosevic, is designed to complete the task begun by Tito during the Second World War of eradicating the Bosnian Muslims as a people, and the Bosnian Catholics along with them. Mr. Malcolm is scathing in his denunciation of the ban imposed by the United Nations on the acquisition of weapons by Bosnia after the Serbian invasion of April 1992. He is coldly contemptuous, and rightly so, of the British foreign secretary, Douglas Hurd, for insisting on the maintenance of the ban since to allow the Bosnians to defend themselves would "only prolong the fighting."

There are few works of scholarship that I have read in recent decades that have impressed me as much as Noel Malcolm's. His range of sources is formidable—Latin, German, French, Italian, and, in particular, Serbo-Croatian. He writes the clearest English prose imaginable, with an enviable talent for hitting upon the exact word or phrase to elucidate an argument or delineate a character. One can only hope that similar qualities, along with a measure of the courage and clarity of vision that Mr. Malcolm exhibits, will inform the judgment of the international penal tribunal at The Hague when it comes to assess, as it is now proposing to do, the guilt of Radovan Karadzic and Ratko Mladic for the genocide they have perpetrated in Bosnia.

The tribunal will not, alas, find much to help it in its task in David Rieff's book. His heart is undoubtedly in the right place, and there is no question that he writes well, even if given to a certain prolixity. But he really has nothing of measurable value to contribute to the melancholy debate over Bosnia. Well over half his book is taken up with expostulations against the United Nations, the Western powers, the Clinton Administration, the Serbs—indeed anyone or any organization that has offended him or disregarded his views.

Something of a veil hangs over his own visits to Bosnia, and what he did or saw there. We don't even reach Bosnian soil until the second half of his book. There is nothing in the way of acknowledgment of what the military contingents from a dozen countries have done there, of the hardships they have endured or the casualties they have suffered. One is put in mind, though the comparison may be a little harsh, of Jimmy Carter's much publicized, brief visit to Sarajevo and Pale: show without substance. Mr. Rieff would have done better to concern himself with the realities on the ground in Bosnia, leaving the diplomatic debate to others. He might then have found out for himself what the former British commander in Bosnia, General Sir Michael Rose, wearily reported on his return: that so long as the arms peddlers, drug dealers, and dubious politicians continue to do a roaring trade out of the war, it is probably fated to drag on for years yet. □

Earth to Easterbrook

RONALD BAILEY

"PLEASE attack me, Fred. Please attack me." Liberal journalist Gregg Easterbrook made this plaintive entreaty to Fred Smith, president of the free-market environmentalist Competitive Enterprise Institute after the Earth Day videotaping of the television program *Think Tank*, which I produce. Why did he want to be attacked? Because Mr. Easterbrook's new book, *A Moment on the Earth*, reveals that the prospects for the imminent demise of Planet Earth have been greatly exaggerated by doomsaying environmentalists. In liberal circles, this is a definite no-no.

"Contemporary doomsaying is hard to excuse, given that it comes at a time when most trends in developed countries are positive and most scientific findings suggest the biosphere is extremely robust," writes Easterbrook. "Environmentalism remains mired in instant-doomsday thinking. Some of this fixation stems from a willful denial of progress made: an almost aching desire that news stay bad." He is surely right about that. Consider:

The air over America is much cleaner than it was when the first Earth Day was celebrated in 1970. Sulphur-dioxide emissions are down 53 per cent; carbon monoxide, down 57 per cent; smoke and soot, down 59 per cent; the precursors to smog, down 39 per cent. Forests in America have made a comeback, expanding from 600 million acres in 1920 to 728 million acres today. As a benchmark, in precolonial times forests covered about 950 million acres. World population has more than doubled since 1950, but food production has tripled. That means, for most of the world's people, that food has become cheaper and more plentiful. The average price of food has dropped an amazing 70 per cent over the past 25 years.

Predictions that the world's population would about double from today's 5.6 billion to about 11 billion by the year 2100 now seem off the mark. A recent analysis of global fertility trends by the World Bank and the Winrock Institute projects that the world's population will most likely top out at about 8 billion in 2035, and fall to about 6 billion by 2100.

What about global warming? Burning coal and oil boosts atmospheric carbon dioxide, which traps the sun's heat, enhancing the so-called "greenhouse effect." Computer models had

A Moment on the Earth: The Coming Age of Environmental Optimism, by Gregg Easterbrook (Viking, 713 pp., $22.95)

Mr. Bailey is the editor of The True State of the Planet, *just out from Free Press.*

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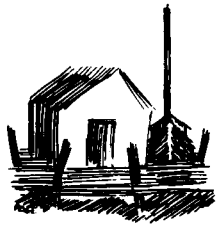
predicted that the earth's average temperature would increase by 0.4° C. over the last 15 years, but now very precise satellite data show that temperatures have actually dropped slightly during that time. As Mr. Easterbrook notes, when global-climate models are run from the past forward, they predict that the world should already be 5° F. warmer than it is. The actual increase has been less than 1° F. The consensus among scientists who deal with empirical climate data is that the globe's average temperature may rise by as much as 1° C. by the year 2100. Neither humanity nor the biosphere will much notice.



The carcinogen scare is also the result of vast exaggerations. Environmentalists claim that we are in the midst of a huge cancer epidemic caused by pesticides and synthetic chemicals. The fact is that except for lung cancer, which is caused by smoking, cancer rates are way down. If Americans were contracting cancer at the same rate as in 1940, 4 million people would have died of cancer in 1988; instead, 2.2 million died. Biochemist Bruce Ames estimates that far less than 1 per cent of cancers can be attributed to synthetic chemicals.

Easterbrook also points out that estimates of species extinction rates are greatly overblown. Environmental alarmists such as Norman Myers say that 150 human-caused extinctions occur each day. This would mean that roughly 1.2 million species should have died out since the Endangered Species Act was adopted in 1973. This extinction rate would imply 72,000 extinctions in the United States alone during the past 22 years. Yet only 7 actual extinctions in the U.S. have been confirmed.

So Mr. Easterbrook has largely got the data right on environmental trends. However, he is way off the mark as to why the trends are so positive. Why? Because he confuses the results of economic progress with the effects of environmental regulation. He fails to understand that the affluence created by free markets precedes and enables environmental clean-up. Merely imposing government regulations doesn't work without the economic wherewithal to implement them. In fact, regulations can have pernicious effects on the environment.

As Interior Department analyst Indur Goklany argues, "Anything which retards economic growth also retards ultimate environmental clean-up." He shows that for most pollutants there is a threshold of wealth at which the amount of a pollutant begins to decline. For example, such particulates as smoke and soot peak when average per-capita income reaches $3,200; sulphur dioxide peaks at $3,700. Because of the importance of safe drinking water, fecal coliform bacteria in rivers start being brought under control when incomes reach $1,400. Imposing expensive environmental regulations on poor countries could easily end up delaying environmental improvements by slowing economic growth.

We are at the point of realizing just how costly the clumsy top-down environmental regulations Easterbrook celebrates have become. Most of the big, obvious problems, such as raw sewage being dumped into rivers, have been dealt with, bringing us to the point of diminishing or even negative returns. For example, the 1970 Clean Air Act cost about $6 billion annually to implement but created about $36 billion in health and environmental benefits. By contrast, the 1990 Clean Air Act amendments cost about $35 billion annually to implement and provide only about $10 billion in benefits.

Mr. Easterbrook also wrongheadedly advocates the "precautionary principle." Even though he shows that the evidence for catastrophic global warming is practically nonexistent, he nevertheless urges that the world's economy begin shifting away from fossil fuels to other, more expensive (and more speculative) technologies and energy sources. In the case of global warming, the "precautionary principle" says that humanity should cut fossil fuel use just because we don't know all the consequences burning fossil fuels will have. Of course, it is impossible to know all the consequences of even the most trivial action. Easterbrook and likeminded environmentalists fail to recognize that following the precautionary principle can lead to greater environmental degradation. By contrast, intelligent use of the trial-and-error method to uncover new knowledge increases resources and wealth. Greater knowledge and wealth give communities resilience, enabling them to respond flexibly and effectively to the unexpected. This is why impoverished people in Bangladesh die by the thousands when cyclones strike their villages, while just 14 Americans died when Hurricane Andrew hit Florida and Louisiana in 1992. Better roads, housing, medical facilities, and emergency-response measures made possible by American wealth make it far easier to weather storms in Florida than in Bangladesh.

That Easterbrook calls for handing over more of the environment and the economy to political management is even more perplexing when you consider his harsh criticism of bungling by agencies such as the Bureau of Land Management and the Forest Service. He even quotes a former Environmental Protection Agency staffer who says, "Everything the EPA does is driven by political considerations rather than scientific considerations. The science is always tailored to support whatever has already been concluded politically."

Most environmentalists understand, as Mr. Easterbrook does not, that only an unrelenting drumbeat of doom will keep the public crying for more regulation, and they will not appreciate Mr. Easterbrook's efforts to dispel the gloom. As the "coming age of environmental optimism" dawns, the policies he supports will increasingly be seen as inefficient and harmful.

"As a liberal, I eagerly await the moment when environmental progress is properly seen as the triumphal achievement of liberal political philosophy," writes Mr. Easterbrook. I predict he will wait a long time. □

By the Numbers

JONATHAN MARSHALL

SOME detectives are expert interrogators; others use blood typing and DNA testing. But Nicholas Eberstadt, a demographer at the American Enterprise Institute, has perfected the study of population statistics to indict perpetrators of political and intellectual crimes.

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His wide-ranging essays cover the gamut from health problems under Communism to claims that the Third World is running out of food. Precisely, analytically, and with never a trace of bombast, Eberstadt brings forth statistic after statistic from obscure official tomes to build an unshakable case against popular myths.

In one chapter particularly relevant to current debates over the future of welfare and family policy, he probes the causes of America's lamented infant-mortality rate. Critics often cite this country's poor standing among major industrial nations to allege that poorer citizens receive second-rate medical care. There is some truth to that claim, of course, but Eberstadt shows the United States has nearly unparalleled success in keeping premature or low-birth-weight infants alive. America's problem lies instead in the huge numbers of such complicated births it confronts, which Eberstadt in turn traces back to the behavior of mothers who drink, smoke, do not want their babies, or have them out of wedlock. Although Eberstadt offers no policy prescriptions, these pervasive issues of personal responsibility are beyond the ability of the health-care system to solve.

The Tyranny of Numbers: Measurement and Misrule, by Nicholas Eberstadt (AEI, 277 pp., $24.95)

To be sure, many of the illusions Mr. Eberstadt punctures are widespread no longer. For instance, his demonstration that health care suffered in some Communist states as a result of misrule might once have challenged liberal orthodoxy but will hardly raise eyebrows today.

Eberstadt's most provocative claims arise in his introduction, written to expose and decry the "tyranny of numbers" referred to in his title. While government statistics may seem dry and dull, he maintains, they are far from harmless. On occasion, they have produced "grave and irreversible" injuries to "large numbers of persons."

Mr. Eberstadt's intriguing point is that statistics provide the rationale for modern governments to extend their sphere of action. Numbers have an almost hypnotic power to seduce citizens into accepting the premise that government knows best how to rule their lives. Eberstadt's point is not simply that governments misunderstand statistics or distort them for political ends. Rather, following Friedrich Hayek, he argues that there are "immutable limits to the knowledge that a state may acquire," and that even well-intended projects to advance the social good through central planning are bound to end in failure and harm.

These general observations are no doubt true enough, but seem oddly disconnected from the substance of the essays that follow. Time and again Mr. Eberstadt finds official statistics reliable enough for his purposes. Time and again he endorses conclusions of analysts at major statistic-producing agencies such as the U.S. Bureau of the Census (where he has worked). His essays vindicate his own profession even as his introduction seems to warn readers away.

Tyrannical governments were a problem long before statistics became widespread. These essays offer few concrete illustrations of how statistics have hugely aggravated social injuries through government misrule. Consider the chapter showing that the CIA overstated the size of the Soviet economy in the 1980s, even to the ludicrous extent of estimating that the USSR's per-capita output of milk was two-fifths greater than the United States'. What real difference did this embarrassing error make? It led the CIA to underestimate Soviet military spending as a share of the Soviet economy, but that never proved much about Soviet political or military intentions.

Eberstadt's far sounder point is less sensational but nonetheless of profound importance: the CIA went astray because its estimates were prepared in secrecy, using methodology it rarely exposed to rigorous scholarly scrutiny. Researchers using unclassified data and sound methods produced estimates of the economic status of the East that were far closer to the mark.

Eberstadt's greatest contribution is precisely in raising the quality of scholarly scrutiny of demographic statistics. By subjecting social and economic claims to careful analysis, he shames fradulent pundits and careless scholars. □

Mr. Marshall is economics editor of the San Francisco Chronicle.

The Content of His Characters

JAMES BOWMAN

WRITERS of fiction in the twentieth century can be divided into the champions of big texture and the champions of big content, and there can be no question that the texturalists have had the better of the conflict. The reassuringly Aristotelian beginning, middle, and end, which used to be thought a minimum requirement for a novel, have given way among the adepts of literary culture to what Ezra Pound called (and called for): "Beginning, Whoop! and then any sort of tail-off." Since Joyce at least, it has become a mark of the cognoscenti to admire prose fiction for its prose, rather than its fiction.

Martin Amis has become the star of his literary generation in Britain by leaving behind the fuddy-duddy Englishness of his father, Kingsley Amis, to adopt with enthusiasm the Hiberno-Continental view of the supreme literary virtue of a learned and coruscating prose style. He has worked very hard on his prose in *The Information*, as he has also done in his earlier books, and there has been little time left over for content. Plot has never been Amis's strong suit. Nor has characterization. Nor have ideas. They are still not. As for politics, he was recently quoted in the British press as saying that "every writer in England votes Labour; . . . there is nothing else to be."

But if you want muscular verbs and striking adjectives, piercingly original images and highly wrought metaphors that make you laugh out loud, if you want to browse through a miscellany of information about astronomy—which, by the way, is not the even more metaphysically portentous "information" of the title—Amis is your man. His subject is the male mid-life crisis, blown up, in his distinctive style, to epic and indeed cosmic proportions.

The Information, by Martin Amis (Harmony, 374 pp., $24)

Actually, that style is in some ways

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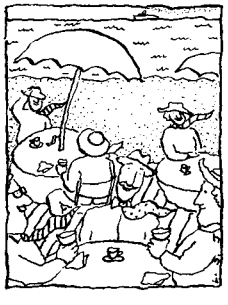
more American, partaking of the Yankee fondness for hyperbole, than British. Dour understatement in the British fashion is no more to Martin Amis's liking than simple storytelling—or than American intellectual life, to judge by the long passage in this novel given over to an American journey by his two British writers, Gwyn Barry, who is fabulously successful, and Richard Tull, who is fabulously unsuccessful.

> Like the lady who was of course still there between the mortarboard and the prosthetic legs (and what a moving acceptance speech she gave), like the laughing athlete who, after that mishap in the carpark, awoke to find himself running a network of charities from his padded rack, Richard had to see whether the experience of disappointment was going to make him bitter or better. And it made him bitter. He was sorry: there was nothing he could do about it. He wasn't up to better. Richard continued to review books. He was very good at book reviewing. When he reviewed a book, it stayed reviewed. Otherwise he was an ex-novelist (or not ex so much as void or phantom), the Literary Editor of *The Little Magazine,* and a Special Director of the Tantalus [vanity] Press.

Naturally, it is Richard with whom Amis, who has always had a penchant for the portrayal of failure on a heroic scale, identifies himself. But Richard and Gwyn are obviously literary and spiritual twins, whose convergence in the hurried final pages of the novel constitutes—insofar as it could be said to possess such a thing—its moral.



Actually, there is a shadowy Martin Amis figure who also appears here and there in the novel when it comes time for morals. It is he who explains all about astronomy and about "The Information"—the news of mortality and the middle-aged man's dawning realization of it. The information is: You will die. It is this Amis figure, rather than Richard, who tells us that "The information is telling me to stop saying hi and to start saying bye." There is meant to be an obscure connection between this sad awareness of death and Richard's obsessive envy and hatred of Gwyn, but Amis does not have the patience to spell out what it is. Instead, he frames deep thoughts in, more or less, his own voice, as when he reflects on how people read a certain kind of thin-textured, big-content novel in airports:

> Whatever junk novels were, however they worked, they were close to therapy, and airports were close to therapy. They both belonged to the culture of the waiting room. Piped music, the language of calming suasion. Come this way—yes, the flight attendant will see you now. Airports, junk novels: they were taking your mind off mortal fear.

Meanwhile, Richard is conspiring, for no very good reason, to get his friend beaten up, rejected, divorced, accused of plagiarism, or harried by petty worries—though all his plans, like his novels, fail and only serve to strengthen Gwyn further. Be he never so textural a writer, however, Amis cannot quite disregard the demands of character and of drama. And when we look for the Eliotic "objective correlative" we cannot help noticing that "mid-life crisis" is a pretty thin and a pretty glib explanation for the characteristically exaggerated hatred Richard feels for Gwyn. What is it he envies him for, anyway? Only money and celebrity, so far as we can see—an appropriately vulgar counterpart to the cheap pop-psychology of the "mid-life crisis."

It is not as if we cannot believe in the titanic proportions of Richard's envy so much as that it is inspired by trivialities. It is not Gwyn's literary success but all its tawdry trappings—the army of worshipful fans, the rock video, the teenaged groupies at Gwyn's book signings who ask him to autograph the insides of their thighs. Oh man! Can life get any better than this? Well, yes it can, actually. And Richard knows that too, for he would really rather destroy Gwyn, bring him down to his own level, than enjoy the life that Gwyn enjoys. You begin to see why his authorial alter ego is convinced that "there is nothing else to be" politically but a socialist.

It is also richly ironic that Martin Amis has himself become such a self-conscious celebrity in Britain because of this book and his divorce and his expensive dental work and the controversy about his publisher's advance of some three-quarters of a million dollars. Clearly, Amis is more Gwyn than Richard.

There is another convergence here—a convergence of art and life—that is also present in the novel. After Richard's return from America, when all his remaining hopes for his own success are dashed, and all his plans to ruin Gwyn have come to nothing, he suffers a kind of terminal resignation which is reflected in the perfunctoriness of the novel's efforts to tie up its loose ends. Richard engages in one last scheme to ruin Gwyn by contriving, with infinite trouble, to have him accused of plagiarism, but he abandons it at the point of success in the last few pages—just as there is a shocking revelation about his wife and an even more shocking incident involving his son, Marco.

None of this potentially dramatic stuff is developed at all. It is as if Amis himself partook of the spiritual lassitude of his hero:

> It seemed to him that all the time he used to spend writing he now spent dying. His mind was free now. . . . This was the truth. And it shocked him. It shocked him to see it, naked. Literature wasn't about living. Literature was about not dying.
>
> Suddenly he knew that writing was about denial.
>
> Suddenly he knew that denial was great. Denial was so great. Denial was the best thing. Denial was even better than smoking.

Well, denial that takes the form of writing like this is certainly exhilarating. It excites us in the odd metaphor (the "dole quaffing fruit machines" in a sleazy pub), in the sensational simile (he imagines intercourse between old Casaubon and Dorothea in *Middlemarch* as "like trying to get a raw oyster into a parking meter"), in unexpected reversals (Gwyn's hotel suite in New York contains "bouquets and bowls of fruit, presumably real but impressively fake-looking"), and in plain funny jokes (Richard finds it strange that he feels dizzy because he "was very good at the party and carefully counted his drinks: he'd had 17").

Sometimes this kind of brilliance is sustained over a whole paragraph, as when he tells of Richard's first reaction on meeting Gina, his wife-to-be, when she was a cashier in a museum:

> The world had not found out about her. How come? Because Richard knew it couldn't just be *him.* This was genetic celebrity, which had an audience and an

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essential value. In other times and climes her family would have kept her in a locked room and held an auction on her 16th birthday. Leaning forward at her desk, counting money, and sighing without weariness, she was ten years further on into womanhood—and the word, the phone calls and faxes, still had time to go out to the planet's playboys, all of them, from the pub spiv with his white-lipped salacities, up past the jodhpurred joke in his jeep, and right the way through to the kind of OPEC kleptocrat who blew half his GNP on his own Johnson. Richard felt the ignoble excitement of a Sotheby's smoothieboy buying a Titian from a tinker.

But, at the risk of proclaiming a philistine attachment to mere content, how much better the novel would have been if Amis had made some effort to create a character who could—as poor Gina, neglected as much by her creator as by her husband, never comes close to doing—live up to that description. □

FILM

Subverted Summer

JOHN SIMON

NIKITA Mikhalkov has made some greatly admired movies that left me cold (though I missed his famed *Oblomov*), but with ***Burnt by the Sun*** he has completely won me over. It is a film in which we often don't know whether reality is surreal, or surreality real. And why, in Stalin's Russia of 1936, should we know? This was the moment when the Revolution lost all conceivable sense and began to devour its most faithful children to satisfy the insane lust for power of one of our century's two bloodiest dictators.

Colonel Sergei Kotov is a distinguished hero of Bolshevism, a friend of Stalin's, a leader in war, a popular favorite in peace. He now lives in a delectable dacha amid bounteous wheatlands with his much younger, loving wife, Marusya, and their beguiling 6-year-old daughter, Nadya. They are surrounded by Marusya's extended family, which includes a great-grandmother and a devoted but benighted maid, made for teasing. It is a summer day of an intensity, preciousness, and lingering sweetness known only where winters are long and punishing, and where such a rare, irreplaceable day is felt as a matchless benison.

But there is trouble in paradise. Even as Sergei is enjoying an early-morning sauna with his wife and child, someone comes to fetch him because tanks on maneuver are about to overrun and destroy the farmers' wheat, and who but Colonel Kotov, the living legend whose uncannily Stalin-like face is a folk icon, could stop them? He does so, with a wonderful mixture of gruffness and charm, and the young lieutenant whom he jokily bullies into submission is so entranced that he momentarily forgets his own name.

It is a Chekhovian day; more precisely, a Chekhov-first-act day, before the clouds have gathered. But already we saw a prologue in which a young man, Mitya, returns to his well-appointed Moscow apartment at dawn, and contemplates shooting himself. A bit later in the film (but earlier in time), he shows up in comical disguise at the dacha. Absent for years, he is a family friend who, in extreme youth, had been Marusya's lover. His unexpected dropping in troubles Marusya and instills jealousy into Sergei.

Yet like a ubiquitous ray of sunshine (a good ray—there is also a destructive, fireball-like ray that burns a swath through the film), little Nadya spreads her now cajoling, now spunky warmth over all. Perkily precocious one minute, she is cozily cherubic the next and, in either mood, irresistible. But she is still a child, unable to comprehend, for example, that when Mitya left her mother to go abroad, Marusya tried to commit suicide, then waited over a year for him to return before yielding to Sergei's blandishments. What Marusya doesn't know is that Mitya, a former White, had to choose between jail or spying abroad for the Reds. All sorts of things emerge during this summer day on which various relatives, friends, and the maid indulge in their humdrum activities and ludicrous chatter, while something monstrous brews at the heart of farce.

Marusya behaves neurotically as Mitya twits and torments her, shuttling between buffoon and memory-wielding inquisitor. Some of this takes place on the lakeshore, where the uneasy Sergei takes Nadya boating so as to leave his wife and her ex-lover to their reminiscences. Meanwhile a nearby work crew is busy on what seems to be the launching pad for hot-air balloons; draped across it is a huge red banner proclaiming the glory of Stalin's balloon builders. A free concert of "music by a Soviet composer" is announced by loudspeakers to the holiday crowd, but what we hear mostly is a swoony popular tango, first sung to a small-band accompaniment, later played on a phonograph, and often tunelessly chirped by Nadya. Reminiscent of the andante of the Villa-Lobos String Quartet No. 7, and even more of Nino Rota's scores for Fellini, it has a lyric that begins with the eponymous words "Burnt by the sun." The soundtrack takes it up as a leitmotif, sometimes romantically appropriate, sometimes cruelly ironic; it should fill anyone who remembers the sentimental dance music of the European Thirties with a sympathetic tremor.

The movie achieves a unique aura of timelessness. You keenly feel a sense of transcendence, of the temporal falling away, of moments of joyously foolish activity spilling out of an inexhaustible cornucopia. Time appears as a fabulously wealthy benefactor who has invited these privileged guests to a never-ending house party to bestow upon them the gift of his standing still. And with that comes a sense of incomparable weightlessness.

That, however, is in the higher register, in the melody. Down in the bass, the accompaniment starts growling ominously. Mitya, who improvises a portentously doomy fairy-tale for Nadya—its threat not lost on the parents—is less of a prankster now and more of a veiled menace. And not unlike Eduard Artemiev's deceptively lulling music, Vilen Kaluta's cinematography is almost treacherously beautiful: the world takes on a lacquer that cannot but be brittle.

Let me mention one more marvel, a scene of conjugal lovemaking of discreet yet pervasive sensuality. Aroused again by Mitya, Marusya flees from Sergei, who chases her up into the attic, whence she threatens to jump if he comes any nearer. With infinite, fatherly tact, the husband woos his frag-

Mr. Simon is NR*'s film critic.*

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ile wife back into his arms, and the ensuing coupling may just be the only one on film you experience not as a voyeur but as a participant. It is a hymn to married love, but also a trenchant image of the transience of bliss.

Nikita Mikhalkov co-wrote the screenplay, directed it, and plays Sergei, all three with equal finesse. As an actor, he can twirl his Stalin mustache with twinkling joviality, take command with more lightning than thunder, or suffer with wrenching bewilderment. I have problems with the Mitya of Oleg Menchikov: the comedian, the wastrel, the snake are all properly in place, but I miss the charm, the seduction. As Marusya, Ingeborga Dapkunaite has all the feyness and volatility of this precariously balanced young woman, along with an otherworldliness that negates guilt. Nadya, played by Mikhalkov's daughter Nadya, is a child in a million, and an actor in rather more than that. Knowledge and innocence, coquetry and naïveté, bubbly brattiness and unself-conscious pathos exude from her as naturally as breath from the mouth. And she really was 6 at the time.

Some have found *Burnt by the Sun* slow-moving, yet this slowness is imbued with meaning, and a necessary foil for the dreadful accelerando of the last part, where surreal-seeming elements abound. We have heard much about the banality of evil; here we get its grotesquery. And its illogic. The questions that remain unreplied to are deeper than any answers.

■ I have had scant use for Steven Soderbergh's *sex, lies, and videotape*, and less for his *Kafka* and *King of the Hill*. Now comes a film that he had no writing hand in. So here is a chance to see what he can do when he can concentrate on his directing, which, in American film, is far more important than screenwriting. And I declare that in ***The Underneath***, Mr. Soderbergh flunks the test with flying colors.

These flying colors are not just a metaphor. For the young director, with the help of his cameraman, Elliot Davis, immerses us in meaningless color baths that recur throughout. Sometimes everything is awash in greens, sometimes in blues or reds; most often there is no justifying colored-light source. And sometimes Soderbergh contrives a multicolored background as if, with conspicuous arbitrariness, the entire scene were shot in front of a cathedral window.

Equally exasperating are the extreme closeups. Thus someone will be talking in full-face or three-quarters in a very tight shot while, even more unbearably close, is the interlocutor, seen in quarter profile. The effect is visually obstreperous without dramatic necessity. Again, there are double exposures galore; indeed, the whole movie is a virtual double exposure with its dizzyingly alternating time frames: the past, in which the hero, Michael, is bearded; the present, in which he is clean-shaven. That is the only gauge: our orientedness hangs by some facial hair. And there are both flashbacks and flashforwards.

Joshua Donen and Daniel Fuchs's screenplay, a remake of the 1947 *Criss Cross*, is an unrelenting concatenation of double and triple crosses, the characters' dishonesty compounded by the cheating of the filmmakers. The plot is murky in the extreme, and figures such as Michael's mother and brother pop in and out as contrivances, not integral components. The hero's mistress, his ex-wife, and her gangster husband are all insufficiently explored, which might not matter if the plot were novel or made a modicum of sense, but no such luck.

Two young actresses, Alison Elliott and Elisabeth Shue, are fetching and effective, and some supporting parts are well taken. But the film has a major minus in its middle: the Michael of Peter Gallagher. A passable actor, Gallagher has a most unsettling face: that of a pretty boy with hypertrophic eyebrows and lush, lipstick-enhanced lips. His entire countenance seems to deliquesce into a splotch of spreading goo. In any number of ways, *The Underneath* is beneath contempt. □

MANNERS IN ST. LOUIS

Poetic Injustice

TIMOTHY GOEGLEIN

ST. LOUIS is a wonderfully self-conscious city and not a little celebratory about its unique history and geography at the confluence of the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers. As I discovered on a recent weekend visit, it is difficult to drive more than a few miles without seeing some reminder of St. Louis's or Missouri's great and diverse history. Statues of eminent citizens are found in the city's beautiful parks, in its tree-lined antique neighborhoods, and in the downtown area near the Missouri Statehouse. The most notable architectural structure in St. Louis is the 630-foot stainless-steel Gateway Arch, designed by Eero Saarinen to commemorate the city's historic role as "Gateway to the West."

But the shininess of the Arch is not typical of St. Louis's public style. The city thinks of itself, rather, as the epitome of an older, better idea of Midwestern urbanity, more oak paneling than stainless steel.

The St. Louis Symphony Orchestra, founded in 1880, is the second oldest in the United States. St. Louis is the home of five universities and numerous colleges, among them one of the best liberal-arts schools in America, Washington University.

But then there is the matter of T. S. Eliot. In this city of cultural monuments there is no memorial, no garden, no library, no museum, no bronze bust, no marker, nothing that would tell the world it was the birthplace and childhood home of the greatest poet and literary critic of the modern era. At a time when Eliot's reputation is in the ascendancy, when he and his first wife are the subject of a popular (if unflattering) feature film, when his least important poems have been transformed into one of the most popular musicals in history, when academics are increasingly embracing the poet they were viciously attacking only twenty years ago, it is, from the perspective of St. Louis, as if he had never lived here.

Eliot was born at home on Septem-

Mr. Goeglein, a writer in Alexandria, Virginia, is executive director of the T. S. Eliot Memorial Development Committee.

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ber 26, 1888, in a house that stood at 2635 Locust Street, near downtown. The house is long gone. That spot is now a paved parking lot, owned by Southwestern Bell.

When I inquired of the Southwestern Bell Foundation, headquartered in Texas, whether they would be willing to erect a memorial, or a small marker, or anything at all noting that it was Eliot's birthplace, I was told by the Foundation's president that "there isn't much interest in poets." I then approached the local district manager of Bell. I wrote him letters, exchanged telephone calls, and shared some ideas with him. He said he would consider them, and get back to me.

I never heard from him again. Instead, I was put in touch with a community-relations fellow who told me that Southwestern Bell "may have other plans" for the property.

So I tried the next best thing: the Danforth Foundation. The Danforth name is most famously associated with the Ralston Purina Company and Eveready Batteries, and has its home office in St. Louis. William Danforth just retired as the chancellor of Washington University. I thought that if ever there was a project the Danforth Foundation might want to assist, it would be a memorial to T. S. Eliot. Alas, the director wrote me saying that the memorial fell outside the Foundation's funding priorities.

None of this should come as a surprise. In 1980, a Washington University spokesman said of Eliot, "We still consider him one of our favorite sons . . . but most of his generation is dead." While a great city, St. Louis is sometimes a distinctly parochial one.

The last push for an Eliot memorial was a study in provincialism. A prominent Hungarian-American, Dr. Leslie Konnyü, spent a great deal of time in the early 1970s working to establish a fitting tribute, only to have his efforts rejected, mostly out of indifference on the part of the city's leading residents.

But Konnyü would not be defeated. Out of a powerful artistic commitment, he privately commissioned sculptor Andrew Osze to create a small bronze plaque honoring Eliot, which Konnyü then tried to give to St. Louis.

"The enthusiasm from the community was sorely lacking," Konnyü was quoted as saying at the time. "There was even outright opposition. Some write him off because he was an expatriate . . . others don't like the idea of his [early] negative poetry." In 1980, with a memorial in hand but no place to display it, Konnyü humbly affixed the 17-by-29-inch bronze plaque to his suburban ranch home in St. Louis's South County.

Following Konnyü's death, the plaque was donated to the St. Louis Public Library, where today it is exhibited in a small locked room. To get in to see the plaque you must be assisted by a staff member.

It is an irony that St. Louis had a direct impact on much of Eliot's best poetry. Eliot said the title of "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" came from a sign he had seen once in St. Louis—for the William Prufrock Furniture Company. The "yellow fog that rubs its back upon the windowpanes" was a St. Louis fog, he later said. And "the strong brown god" in "Four Quartets" clearly refers to the Mississippi. Eliot even made two famous return trips to Missouri, in 1953 and 1959. On these occasions, he spoke warmly about growing up here.

Eliot never lost his love for the region, admitting that "Missouri and the Mississippi have made a deeper impression on me than has any other part of the world." His Irish nursemaid took him as a child to see buffalo in Forest Park (now an exclusive, leafy part of town), and he loved to hear the steamboat whistles from the river. He always remembered St. Louis, though it doesn't seem to remember him.

St. Louis at its best is too dynamic a city, too sensitive to poetry and the arts, to forget one of its greatest sons. Eliot is an essential part not only of St. Louis's literary history but also of the Midwest's contribution to American and Western literature. It is, in the words Eliot used in "Four Quartets," appropriate that we now "redeem the time." □

BOOKS IN BRIEF

Marijuana: The Forbidden Medicine, by Lester Grinspoon and B. James Bakalar (Yale, 184 pp., $25)

AFTER one hundred pages of anecdotal evidence exhaustively detailing the medical potential of marijuana, Dr. Grinspoon and Mr. Bakalar thought to dash off two pages defending "anecdotal evidence." Had they resisted this impulse—perhaps a last-minute suggestion from their editor?—their book would have been even more powerful. The stories of relief are well documented and tremendously empathetic—just the sort of thing that can convince a person who has reflexively condemned the medicinal use of marijuana that he is grievously in error. Whether or not marijuana should be as legal as whisky, this book makes it demonstrably clear that it should be as legal as Valium. The brief history of marijuana in the first chapter and the justification for full legalization in the last I could have done without. But for those who would deny medicinal marijuana to terminal cancer patients (though it can lift the burden of wrenching nausea) and glaucoma victims (though it can prevent the plunge into darkness), *Marijuana: The Forbidden Medicine* ought to be required reading.

—Andrew Oliver II

Getting There: The Epic Struggle of Road and Rail in the American Century, by Stephen B. Goddard (Basic, 351 pp., $28)

THIS is a story of how the robber barons of the railroads were eventually brought down by the Grangers and the Interstate Commerce Commission, how the new barons of Detroit conspired to replace trolleys with rubber-tired monsters, and how in turn the auto/highway complex was attacked by the new Green populists who would route us back to the rails. It is written in lively if somewhat overblown style and contains many fascinating tales. Its flaw is the author's ability to hold utterly contradictory positions on the central issues. Competition, he says, is "predatory" and "socially blind." Awful "rebates" from regulated railroads to customers had to be "unmasked" by virtuous ICC regulators and "visionary" officials, he says when wearing a planner's hat. Yet he concedes that the middle of this century "offered a sobering lesson" on how disastrous government planning and detailed regulation of transport can be, and he actually celebrates the deregulation that began in the late 1970s. Perhaps Mr. Goddard should take a class in public-choice theory—not to mention logic—to make his next book more coherent.

—Peter Samuel

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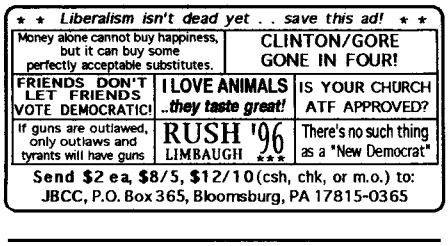
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JOST/TOBIN
(Continued from page 55)

"Request for Funding" from Gingrich's operatives confirms this arrangement. It promised donors in the $10,000-to-$50,000 range that they could have input on the curriculum.

When officials at Reinhardt College learned of these facts, they conducted their own review of the course and instructed Gingrich to remove the offending commercials. Professor Kathleen Minnix, who co-teaches the course at Reinhardt with Gingrich, told *Roll Call,* "What I found is essentially what you found." Professor Minnix told the *Atlanta Constitution* the commercials were to be removed because of the "appearance of impropriety."

Mr. Jost's figures appear to be outdated or incomplete. The correct figure for all costs related to course development, as provided to me by the course director, is $660,000. Lee Shepard relied on the same number in her piece for Tax Notes Today. *I have no reason to doubt its accuracy.*

At most, 12 per cent of the corporations mentioned in the course were also sponsors. In what sense is this "evidence" of fee-based advertising? How did the other 88 per cent of the companies get mentioned without paying the supposed fee? It seems another selection process was at work here.

The fact that a Reinhardt official expressed concern about the "commercial content" of the course is not surprising. The witch-hunt climate is enough to make any college bureaucrat nervous. Placed in Professor Minnix's position, facing reporters primed for the kill, most people would back away in a hurry and seek safe ground.

6. Mr. Tobin alleges, without support, that the activities of the Kennesaw State College Foundation and the Progress and Freedom Foundation "are unquestionably lawful" in relation to their support for the college course. As reported in the *Washington Post, Roll Call,* and the *Atlanta Constitution*, the ethics committee has several doubts about the lawfulness of the course. The case has many parallels with an earlier case brought before the IRS. It turns out that GOPAC consultant Joe Gaylord was a board member of the American Campaign Academy, a tax-exempt entity shut down by the U.S. Tax Court because it improperly engaged in partisan political activity.

This parallel was raised not by any complainant but by the ethics committee investigating Gingrich. On October 10, 1994, the committee wrote to Gingrich and asked about Mr. Gaylord's role in the college course. The partisan marketing of the course and GOPAC's extensive role raise serious questions about whether the tax-exempt foundations behind the course acted lawfully. More recently, the *Atlanta Constitution* disclosed that Gingrich's own ethics attorney, Jan Baran, also served on the board of the Campaign Academy and prepared the articles of incorporation. Mr. Gingrich had plenty of reason to know in advance that he was revisiting dangerous tax-law waters.

The "parallels" between the Gingrich course and the American Campaign Academy *case are specious. The argument that, because GOPAC allegedly promoted the course, the non-profit foundations sponsoring the course must have acted illegally is preposterous. GOPAC (or the Democratic National Committee) is free to cite and promote any product produced by any nonprofit group—such as papers produced by the Heritage Foundation or the Brookings Institution. Furthermore, the American Campaign Academy never had 501(c)(3) status. In contrast, Kennesaw State College Foundation is a well-established 501(c)(3) with a far broader agenda than the "Renewing American Civilization" course.*

The "Renewing American Civilization" course has a demonstrable public benefit. The essential issue in American Campaign Academy *was whether political campaigns or parties are private or public beneficiaries. There is no such issue here. The link to Joe Gaylord is yet another vague associative allegation with no apparent point.*

7. Mr. Tobin attacks a March 8, 1995, story in the *Washington Post* as a "distortion" and "the exact reverse of the truth" on the critical issue of whether the Grandy/McDermott letter authorized Gingrich to use the House floor to solicit for the course. Tobin's tortured logic is that by granting Gingrich permission to place his lectures in the *Congressional Record,* this letter gave Gingrich a blanket exemption from complying with the House rules, especially those cited in the letter. It is completely lost on Tobin that this letter, like all advisory opinions from the ethics committee, granted only conditional approval for Gingrich's conduct, so long as Gingrich complied with *all* House rules.

Mr. Tobin has undermined Mr. Gingrich's case. We have learned from Gingrich's staff that he used official resources on the course. Documents before the ethics committee show that GOPAC staff reprinted Gingrich's *Congressional Record* remarks and enclosed them with their requests for funding, violating the prohibition on "official endorsement." We know Gingrich personally profits from the course with his $4.5-million book deal that Jeffrey Eisenach and agent Lynn Chu both say is based on the lectures.

Is there any doubt now that an independent counsel is needed in this case? If the Gingrich organization will go to these lengths to distort the facts, change dates, and misrepresent what happened, what more are they hiding?

An uninformed reader of the Kovaleski piece in the Post *would be falsely persuaded that the ethics committee saw some serious problems in Gingrich's course proposal and issued specific warnings as a result. The story asserts that Gingrich then violated these warnings. The reality is that the ethics committee saw no problems. It said the course proposal was well within the rules, which it summarized. Any spin to the contrary is false. I neither claimed nor implied that the Grandy letter created a blanket exemption from House rules.*

Mr. Jost's comment that GOPAC's reprint from the Congressional Record *represents an "official endorsement" in violation of Rule 43 is nonsensical. And the closing gratuitous slap at the book deal is noteworthy only for its brevity.*

Lastly, I am not part of any "Gingrich organization." I have never worked for Gingrich, any organization involved with the course, GOPAC, or the Republican Party. I have never met, spoken to, or corresponded with Mr. Gingrich. I have derived no income directly or indirectly from any of these groups. I was invited to submit an article to NATIONAL REVIEW *by the editor, who acted on the recommendation of a mutual friend at* NR. *I did so with no instructions as to content, and the article was edited for length and style only.* □

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TRANS-O-GRAM / Kem Putney

1 B	2 F	3 J		4 G	5 A	6 M	7 K	8 P	9 I	10 C	11 D	12 S		13 E	14 H	15 G	16 M		17 F	18 B
19 N		20 S	21 J	22 C	23 M	24 G		25 L	26 H		27 D	28 I	29 B		30 P	31 E	32 A	33 J	34 I	35 F
36 H	37 N	38 B	39 L	40 P		41 Q	42 K	43 G		44 C	45 M	46 D	47 S	48 L	49 B	50 K	51 E	52 N	53 R	
54 I	55 A	56 F	57 B	58 O		59 N	60 C	61 H	62 D	63 K	64 J		65 G	66 R	67 P		68 L	69 M	70 E	71 H
72 F	73 K	74 P	75 D		76 J	77 C		78 M	79 S	80 R	81 O		82 G	83 F	84 K		85 N	86 A	87 B	88 D
89 E	90 I		91 L	92 H		93 J	94 M	95 L	96 G	97 Q	98 D	99 S		100 S	101 G	102 M	103 A	104 B	105 D	106 Q
	107 C	108 K	109 F	110 B		111 E	112 L	113 A		114 H	115 F		116 I	117 C	118 L		119 B	120 L	121 P	122 I
123 Q	124 K	125 A	126 C	127 M	128 J	129 O	130 N	131 R		132 Q	133 G	134 E	135 D		136 I		137 F	138 K	139 J	140 O
	141 G	142 J		143 H	144 S	145 P	146 B	147 M		148 N	149 A	150 E								

DEFINITIONS

A. This is what we should do to government — 113 86 149 55 32 103 125 5

B. Feat — 49 119 18 146 57 87 110 104 29 38 / 1

C. Of sailors and their trade — 77 126 117 60 10 107 22 44

D. Mental capacity — 88 98 46 105 75 62 135 11 27

E. *Consequential* — 89 134 31 150 70 51 111 13

F. Obnoxious talker — 137 72 83 56 109 115 35 17 2

G. Teen's recreational item — 24 15 65 96 101 82 141 133 4 43

H. Table, for the athlete — 143 36 61 71 92 14 26 114

I. *One kind of* offender — 28 34 116 122 90 54 136 9

J. Like a well-oiled machine — 21 142 139 128 93 76 3 64 33

K. Some say women have it — 63 73 84 7 124 50 138 108 42

L. TV canine of yore — 48 120 112 118 91 95 39 25 68

M. Immoral — 6 147 94 78 23 45 102 69 127 16

N. Weighs the facts — 52 19 37 85 148 130 59

O. Utah city — 129 58 140 81

P. Those dam builders — 8 145 74 121 67 30 40

Q. Restraint on Fido — 123 97 41 106 132

R. Slips up — 53 80 66 131

S. *Coddles,* femininely — 20 79 99 144 47 100 12

DIRECTIONS

The object of TRANS-O-GRAM is to fill in the puzzle diagram by guessing the words from their definitions, and transferring each letter of the guessed word to the correspondingly numbered square in the diagram. When the diagram is filled in it will spell out a quotation from some published work (reading normally from left to right, black boxes indicating the ends of words); also, when the words have all been filled in above, their initial letters will spell out the author and title of the quoted work. The acrostic feature, and the relative word-lengths in the diagram, will assist in the solution. Spelling and definitions on the authority of *Webster's Deluxe Unabridged Dictionary*, Second Edition.

Solution to Last Issue's Trans-O-Gram. RAYMOND SCOTT: *The Problem*: "(W)e need to focus our efforts. We often establish temporary programs to deal with an immediate problem, then we extend them long after they've done their job, and we expand them far beyond their original purpose."

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Post Oklahoma, What?

NEW YORK, MAY 2

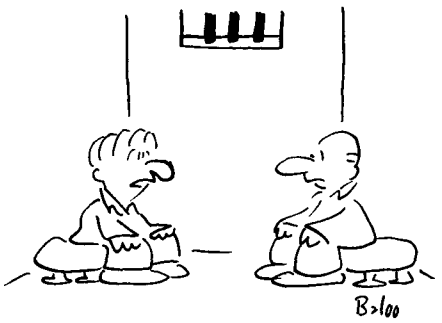
Senator Fred Thompson of Tennessee, who occupies the seat whence Al Gore sprang to haunt us, is professionally concerned with the post–Oklahoma City question. He sits on one of the Senate committees charged with considering recommendations by the President, and with coming up with some of its own. It was a relief to hear him say, on the Larry King show, that he thought it ill advised to come up with any legislation directly traceable to the bombing. Legislation spawned by a single incident tends to be ill considered. Deliberative legislation, which is the kind the Senate ought to specialize in, does not bounce responsively off any one incident, and ought not to. Asked if he had in mind any instructive precedents, he confessed he did not. One thinks of the bill that followed the assassination of President Kennedy, which forbade informal interstate traffic in rifles, a legislative act we have no reason to regret. And then there was the anti-iceberg legislation that thundered in after the *Titanic* went down, which once again we do not regret. Without researching the question, one guesses that the first time a bicyclist attempted to traverse Niagara Falls on a clothesline, the law was passed against flirting with the Falls.

But the public sentiment is there—and representative government is designed to reflect such sentiments—that something ought to be done to make more difficult (preferably, make impossible) the kind of thing that happened in Oklahoma.

Most immediately desirable is the apprehension of the murderers. But here the long shadow of the O. J. Simpson trial falls. If Mr. McVeigh is finally charged with responsibility for the explosion, he will have to proceed without access to a dozen million dollars with which to delay, and perhaps finally to outwit, justice. The great names in criminal defense are not storming in to save Mr. McVeigh from a rush to judgment. Even William Kunstler has declined to step forward, this on the grounds that McVeigh is not a left-winger, and Kunstler reserves his philanthropy for left-wing criminals. It is beside the point, though it is correct that Rush Limbaugh had it right when a few days after Oklahoma he asked whether there was any distinction to be made between right-wing anarchists and left-wing anarchists. Those who oppose any government of any kind form a pool of intellectually lifeless thought. The anarchists can engage one's attention, whether by acts of bravery (the Russian Narodniki) or literary belletrism (Albert Jay Nock): but they do not, for any protracted period, engage the attention of serious men and women.

The question then arises in the public mind: having prosecuted the McVeighs, what do we go on to do? Asked whether in his learned opinion what happened in Oklahoma would have been aborted by the standing anti-terrorist facilities of Germany, France, or England, Senator Thompson said he had no reason to believe that their defenses were more refined, more effective. He inclines to the position that the episode was a horrible confluence of human chemistry and current technology; and one hopes that he is correct.

Professor Alan Dershowitz, contributing to the conversation, made the chilling point that indeed some rhetoric leads to action, and that one must suppose that other individuals, in the months and years ahead, will be impelled to act out their quarrels with the fantasies with which they are fed. But, said he—as one would expect of the complete civil libertarian—whatever the cost of free speech, the deleterious consequences of confining it exceed the benefits of indulging it. Mr. Dershowitz goes so far as to dispute Oliver Wendell Holmes's demurral, that free speech cannot stretch to protecting a man who shouts Fire! in a crowded theater.



"I had no idea the EPA could get you for dandruff."

Well, the actuarial tables will never crystallize on that question. If limits deemed reasonable by reasonable citizens are placed on speech, are we so certain that we will have drowned out somebody who was about to give birth to the *Areopagitica,* or to the electric light bulb, or to the *Rhapsody in Blue*? It is easy to come up with the names of brave thinkers who think their thoughts when tyranny is in the saddle—Solzhenitsyn wrote while Khrushchev reigned. But how many geniuses would be stultified if laws were enacted against the advocacy of violence? We do not need such laws in America, A.D. 1995, but such laws were certainly needed in Peru. Has the suppression of the Shining Path deprived civilization of a great social or scientific insight?

So: What Oklahoma-related legislation will Senator Thompson's committee recommend? At this point: None. □

What Does Clinton Have in Mind?

NEW YORK, APRIL 28

Inasmuch as we are all talking about words and their meaning, what exactly did President Clinton say in Minneapolis? He said that the nation's airwaves are too often used "to keep some people as paranoid as possible and the rest of us all torn up and upset with each other. [Such people] spread hate, they leave the impression that, by their very words, that violence is acceptable. . . . It is time we all stood up and spoke against that kind of reckless speech and behavior."

He meant Rush Limbaugh, no?

But . . . he didn't use the name Rush Limbaugh, White House aides were quick to point out.

Well then, who *did* he have in mind?

Unless the person doing all those awful things on the air waves is a pretty big fixture on the national scene, surely the President of the United States would not bother to single him out for national attention? If it was somebody who got on the air from Tuscaloosa one night to empty his bile, that wouldn't qualify as the object of the President's attention. Right?

The Media Research Center in Wash-

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ington, thinking to call the President's bluff, offered one hundred thousand dollars to anyone who could cite a broadcaster as engaged in the activity Mr. Clinton was condemning. There are (so far) no takers. The best those commentators could do who appeared on the *MacNeil–Lehrer* program was to quote an imprudent remark by Gordon Liddy, but what he said—that if any official came to his house to requisition his pistol, he'd better shoot straight—was more rodomontade than a call to arms or hatred. What a few weekend soldiers in Michigan said was that if tyranny ever came to America, that would be a call to arms. That is of course correct. Be prepared, as the Boy Scouts are taught. In Switzerland every household has a rifle and ammunition, never mind that it's been 150 years since they were needed except for target practice.

No, Mr. Clinton was talking about palpabilities. And everybody knows that the primary target of Mr. Clinton was Rush Limbaugh, the hate spreader. Herewith a personal confession: I do believe that Limbaugh induces hatred: if I were a liberal, I would hate him.

But hatred of that order is of course a part of the democratic experience, and Mr. Clinton of course knows this. He is the proud member of a party whose highly acclaimed leaders during this century have done their best, which has been very good, to "spread hate." Franklin Delano Roosevelt, whatever else his contributions, certainly did his best to cultivate class antagonisms. The lesson was not lost on his successor. On October 25, 1948, in Chicago, running for re-election, President Truman explained to the people what he worried about.

We had only recently won a world war, granted, and all the soldiers were now out of the army and home. But maybe we were too complacent. Certainly President Truman thought so. "Other people," he said then, "have also loved freedom but lost their liberty with tragic suddenness. It happened in Italy 25 years ago. It happened in Germany 15 years ago. It happened in Czechoslovakia just a few months ago. And it could happen here." Oh? It is hard to remember when last Rush Limbaugh warned that fascism might suddenly happen here.

The President's tactics are pretty clear. He put his big, embraceable arms around Oklahoma City and, simultaneously, gun control and the crazies in Michigan—and Rush Limbaugh. Students of forensic language will want to concentrate on what is going on and classify it with care. Here are two definitions taken from the dictionary:

"1. The practice of publicizing accusations of . . . subversion with insufficient regard to evidence.

"2. The use of unfair . . . accusatory methods in order to suppress opposition."

That is how the *American Heritage Dictionary* defines "McCarthyism."

To be sure, as Mr. Truman taught us, we have to guard against losing our freedom suddenly. After all, it happened to Italy 72 years ago, happened to Germany 62 years ago, happened to Czechoslovakia 47 years and a few months ago. □

Pity the Airlines

NEW YORK, APRIL 14

A recent issue of *Fortune* Magazine carries a gloomy story about the airline business. The upshot is that it is a terrible investment but nevertheless continues to attract risk capital even as Broadway shows and presidential candidates attract speculators. It is a glamorous business, yet it is hard to reconcile its apparently ineluctable growth (more people travel every year) with its dismal economic performance. In the past five years the airlines lost nearly all the money they had earned since the first commercial flight in 1914 (St. Petersburg to Tampa).

The writer notes the airlines' response to their economic plight, which is: frugality. Ten years ago it was the cost of fuel that was said to be driving the airlines bananas. But the cost of fuel is down to normal and still parsimony reigns. The reason for this, we are advised, is the aggregate aspect of plane travel. In market situations, if you meet price resistance you reduce incremental costs. You produce one fewer mousetrap. But one-fewer-passenger means an aircraft running at a colossal loss. The curse of the airline is the little competitor who heaves in with the round trip to London for $199. The major airlines have no alternative but to match the price.

Well yes they do, and that is a complaint beginning to surface. Since you can't cancel the flight because you don't have enough paying passengers, what you can do is make them miserable. This is happening at a runaway rate.

Flying last week to Nassau, the Delta 727 stretch was completely full. A full plane isn't necessarily uncomfortable, but it can be made uncomfortable by the simple expedient of invasive configurations, the kind that gives your knees one inch of space if you are 5′10″ or less; no space if you are 6 feet. When the seat tilts back, you have gained perhaps two inches of arc space. For breakfast/brunch we were served one tiny unbuttered untoasted bagel with a tube of cream cheese, and two jiggers of canned orange juice in a plastic saucer—that way you don't have to serve a plastic glass, get it? The traveling bar serves you cold coffee and will sell booze, if you can bring yourself to escapist distractions at 10 in the morning.

That was tourist class. USAir first class won't give you a drinking glass; you will need to use the wobbly plastic things, or else bring a glass from home. United Airlines' seats don't incline back far enough to spill a cup of coffee perched on top. And American—I almost forgot! If you travel first class from Chicago to New York at 8:30 your dinner is—potato chips. The real challenge lies with the folk who write advertising copy for the airlines. What can they say? Not much else than that they will endeavor not to kill you.

The blame is in part the travelers'. Last December MGM Grand Air terminated service on what was the finest flying service (transcontinental) in history. Not enough passengers availed themselves of it, never mind that it charged no more than first class on the regular carriers. Americans can be very odd about luxuries. We spend a trillion dollars or whatever on non-essentials, but refuse to sustain decent trains or transoceanic liners. It would be fine to experiment on, say, three major routes: New York–Miami, New York–Los Angeles, New York–Chicago. Four inches of leg room, seats that tilt back 45°, simple food but good: hot pastrami sandwiches and yoghurt sundaes. But that airline would need to cultivate its clientele, and these things take time. It would need to be distinguished by its absolute guarantee not to compromise its service, ever.

But what would it take to make such a guarantee, over a period of, say, three years? Enough to test the American traveler's consolidated appetite for non-gymnastic travel? To make that effort the airline would need to come up with a ticket that cost one part of the leg you would now be free to maneuver, but not the whole of the leg. Somewhere between APEX prices and business-class prices. But you would need enough capital to see you through the long trial period. MGM discovered that word of mouth isn't enough. You would need modest, non-splashy advertising: constant reminders that air travel need not be an ordeal.

Then? Then if the buying public doesn't sustain it, why, we can always stay at home. □

(Universal Press Syndicate)

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Who's Got the Elitist?

THE definition of "elitist" is spinning out of control. Nailing it down is much harder than mastering French verbs. If you say "*baiser*" instead of "*embrasser*" and somebody takes you up on it, you can have a lot of fun being wrong, but elitist means so many things to so many people that you are damned if you do and damned if you do. Soon it will be possible to list on a three-by-five card all the things that are *not* elitist and still have plenty of room left for the phone numbers of liquor stores that deliver.

This never happened with "elite." Like "deluxe," it was an advertising word that generations of Americans took in stride. Sometimes they got it mixed up with its opposite, "hoi polloi," but it never became a hot button; its few conversational uses were lighthearted, as in "where the elite meet." Perhaps it was protected by the French acute accent (élite) it used to carry—after all, back when "fantasy" was spelled "phantasy" people did not describe their own in public. But elitist never had a French accent mark. Starting life with nothing but a good old American politicized suffix, it pulled itself up by its rootstraps to become the epithet of choice for both sides of the political spectrum. Left or Right, elitist means . . . something bad.

To liberals, elitist is a synonym for racist and sexist. Like the eager swain in fairy tales sent forth by the princess to find three of something, liberals go forth to find conservatives who fit all three. Their stumbling block is the populist Right. Liberals have no trouble accusing this group of racism and sexism, but elitism? Thwarted, the liberals must be content to pin the elitist rose on traditional Republicans only. But where to pin it? All the traditional Republicans have removed their suit jackets to placate the populist Right. Country clubs in shirtsleeves have defined elitism down.

St. Martin's has just published The Florence King Reader, *an anthology.*

To the populist Right, liberalism and elitism are two sides of a Janus face that never loses its symmetry: the further left a liberal moves, the more elitist he becomes. Offended by the British accents and classical music of public broadcasting, the populist Right hurled a blanket charge of elitism at all PBS supporters, unmindful that the lunatic fringe on the tote bag consists of "elitists" who also support the abolition of IQ tests, the replacement of Jane Austen with Alice Walker, and art scholarships for graffiti daubers. Making silk purses out of sour socialists has defined elitism up.

To feminists, an elitist is a fascist is a pro-lifer. When the Supreme Court put restrictions on federally funded abortions, a NOW member said: "It's an elitist position. It denies abortion to the poor and the young." But if elitist meant what she wants it to mean, pro-lifers would favor abortion-as-genocide to reduce the underclass population. What pro-lifers actually favor is their own definition of elitist: a feminist who looks down on full-time motherhood.

No one can fling charges of elitism around like a paleoconservative going after a neo-con. To columnist Samuel Francis, an elitist is anyone he disagrees with—like George Will, who once suggested that gun control might be a good idea in a nation of people unable to program their VCRs. Francis called this "prim elitism" and worked himself up into a lather, saying "elites despise, fear, and hate . . . the law-abiding non-elite," and launched a fusillade at "the gun gestapo's hidden agenda of elitism and statism" that promotes "criminals and their elite allies."

I am tired of the distortion and disparagement of this honorable word. To me elitism means a love of excellence and superiority, but America has declared war on both and developed a sick love of the lowest common denominator to make sure no one becomes too fine for our touted democracy. We are almost at the point of regarding every virtue as elitist. Pride and dignity are now signs of haughty detachment; beggars and hysterics prove their humanity by their faults and become tests of our ability to love. By expecting nothing we get nothing except the chance to go on loving.

Let's face it: elitism lends life a patina it sorely needs. God may have loved the common people but He made far too many of them. As the protagonist of Mary McCarthy's *Birds of America* put it: "I've decided that may be why Parisians are so sullen and why they drink. They thought of equality first."

Elitism also does wonders for vice. The public raucousness we think of as homosexual behavior is actually low-class behavior. Before gay rights and "inclusion" opened the closet door, overt homosexuals were the kind of people one enjoyed knowing socially, but now, as my New England friend observed scornfully, "Vermont is filling up with lesbian goatherds."

THAT would not sit well with the renowned eighteenth-century lovers known as the "Ladies of Llangollen." Lady Eleanor Butler, daughter of the Duke of Ormonde, and the Hon. Sarah Ponsonby, niece of the Earl of Bessborough, ran away together and rented a run-down Welsh farm. Financially strapped, begrudged only two small legacies by their families, they nonetheless did good works among the poor—"the duties of our birth," said the imperious Eleanor. Their guests were "people like ourselves." They did not mean other homosexuals; "I speak of breeding and education," Eleanor explained. As the fame of the Llangollen chatelaines spread, the luminaries of the age—Wordsworth, Walpole, Scott, Burke, Mme de Genlis—made pilgrimages to their farm, proof that tolerance and acceptance await not those who lower their standards but those who raise them.

This was echoed by a resident of Ovett, Mississippi, when that supposedly unsophisticated backwater was invaded by lesbian communards. "I have lived here all my life," she said, "and there are gay couples here, and everyone knows it. The difference is they don't go around hugging and kissing and holding hands and going on TV to talk about it."

ELITISM: the attitude that dares speak its name in politically correct times. —FLORENCE KING

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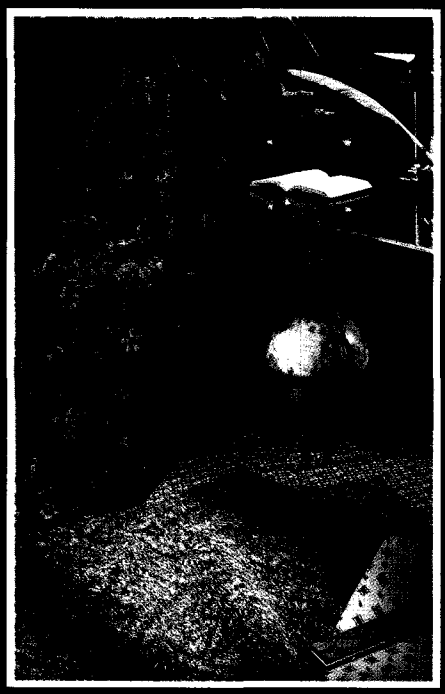

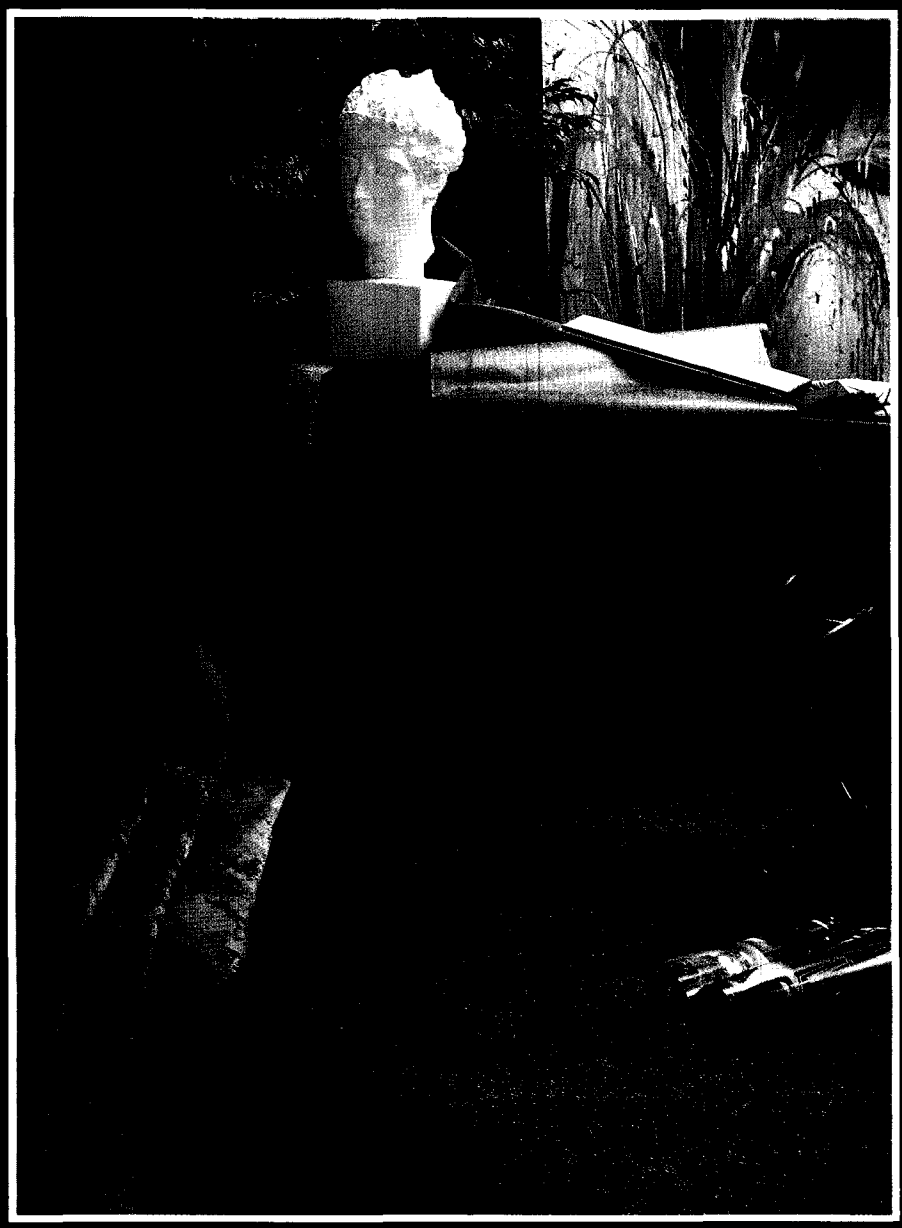

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